Salience at the intersection: Latina/o identities across different campus contexts

Adriana Ruiz Alvarado, University of California, Los Angeles
Sylvia Hurtado, University of California, Los Angeles

Association for the Study of Higher Education, Las Vegas, NV
November 15, 2012
Introduction

- Latina/os comprise 16.5% of all college enrollments
- Population growth not accompanied with more profound understanding of Latina/o identity
- Latina/os are heterogeneous population – there is even variability in racial identification
- Important to know how students think about their own identities because it shapes how they experience college
Purpose

- Employ an intersectionality framework to examine the salience of different social identities across a variety of campus contexts

- Testing Distinctiveness Theory (McGuire, 1984): distinctive traits more salient
Data and Sample

- 2010-2011 Diverse Learning Environments survey
- 34 institutions
- N=4,200 students
  - Mexican-American 61%
  - Puerto Rican 2.6%
  - Central American 8.4%
  - Other Latina/o 28%
Measures

- **Salience**
  - “How often do you think about your (social identity)?”
    - Race, Class Gender, Sexual Orientation, Citizenship
- **Intersectionality**
  - Ethnicity, generation status, citizenship status, income, and sexual orientation by gender
- **Context**
  - Percentage of full-time undergraduate students that are URM, Latina/o, female, Latina female, and federal Pell Grant recipients
Salience Across Intersecting Identities

- **Race**: 47.3% have high salience
  - 57.5% of Central American females
  - 52.5% of first-generation Latina/os

- **Class**: 49.3% have high salience
  - 59.6% of Central American females
  - 53.9% of Mexican American females
  - 46.2% of Central American males

- **Citizenship**: 20.2% have high salience
  - 77.4% of Latina/os with Other Citizenship
Salience Across Intersecting Identities

Percent Indicating High Class Salience, by Income Quartile

- Q1: Less than $50k
- Q2: $50k-$74,999
- Q3: $75k - $149,999
- Q4: More than $150k

% of Latina/o Students

- Male
- Female
Salience Across Intersecting Identities

Percent of LGBT Students Indicating High Salience of Gender and Sexual Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salient Gender</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salient Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Salience Across Different Contexts

Percent of Students Indicating High Salience of Race

- Mexican American
- Puerto Rican
- Central American
- Other Latina/o

Percent Latina/o of College

% of Latina/o Students

0-20 21-35 35+
Salience Across Different Contexts

Percent of Students Indicating High Salience of Class

- Q1: <$50k
- Q2: $50-74,999
- Q3: $64-149,999
- Q4: $150+

% Pell Grant Recipients in College

% of Latina/o Students
## Salience Across Different Contexts

### Percent of Males Indicating High Gender Salience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Percent Female</th>
<th>Percent Latina Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Salience Across Different Contexts

Percent of Males Indicating High Gender Salience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Percent Female/Percent Latina in College</th>
<th>Percent Female</th>
<th>Percent Latina</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>&lt;45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>45%–55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>&gt;55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Percent Female: 1= <10%, 2=10% to 20%, 3= >20%
- Percent Latina Female: 1= <45%, 2= 45%–55%, 3= >55%
There is support for distinctiveness theory, but there is also a phenomenon of societal underrepresentation – all of the less privileged identities had higher salience.

Exploring intersections and salience can reveal sources of strength or vulnerability.

Intragroup differences are important to consider because they may determine educational outcomes.