

# Effective Narrative Therapy Techniques with Latin@ College-Aged Clients

Angélica Galván & Leslie D. Bohn

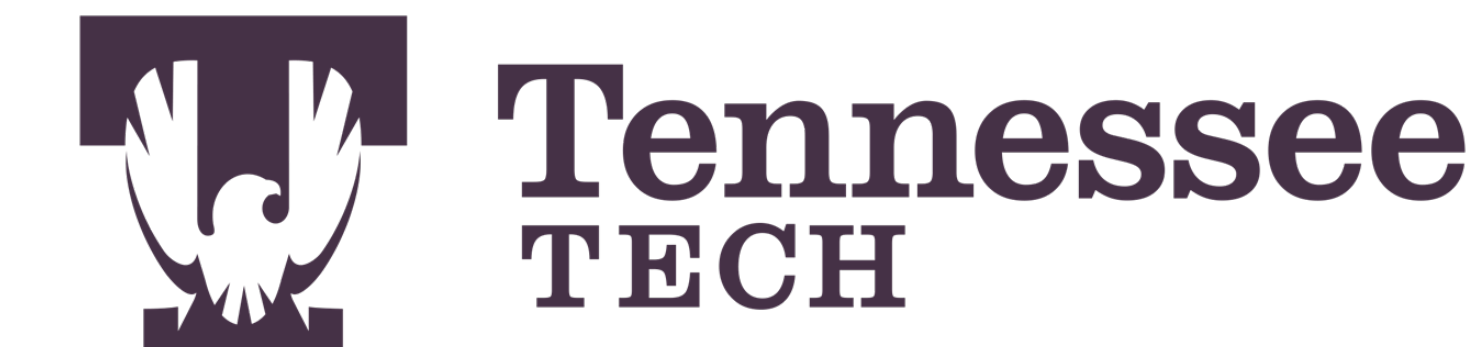
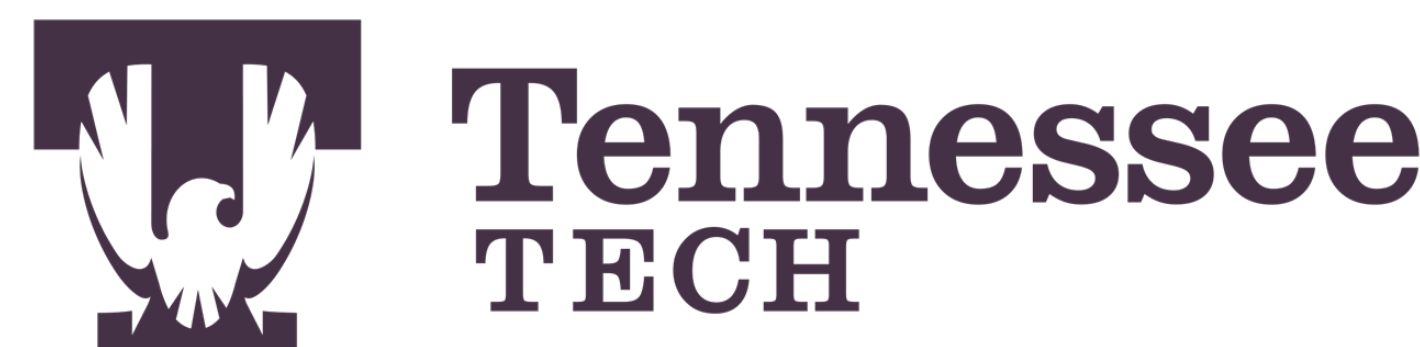
Tennessee Technological University

12<sup>th</sup> Annual Research and Creative Inquiry Day 2017

Cookeville, TN

Originally presented at Tennessee Counseling Association 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2016  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

Tennessee Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Graduate Student Poster Competition



## Introduction

The Latin@ population in the United States is projected to increase by 115% by 2060 (US Census 2015), and the enrollment of that population in post-secondary, degree-granting institutions is also projected to increase (see Figure 1). Narrative therapy has been used championed by competent counselors in/for multiple areas (e.g. academic, career); however, little research is available on narrative therapy's efficacy specifically concerning a Latin@ college-aged population. Featured here is a review of literature on this population, on counseling this population, and on using narrative interventions and techniques to do so. We conclude with a brief discussion of need for further inquiry.

## Findings: Latinos in Higher Education

Hispanic college students often attend two-year colleges (see Figure 1) and enroll for less than full time in order to meet familial and financial responsibilities (NCES, 2015). "Hispanics represent the largest and fastest growing minority population in the United States, yet their college access and success statistics remain alarmingly low" (Pyne & Means, 2013, p.186)

Many demands and stressors placed on the Hispanic student can be overwhelming and lead to higher drop-out rates, depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems (Cervantes, Minero, & Brito, 2015).

**Counseling may benefit the Latino student in adjusting to college life, transitioning from a community college to a university, and integrating the student's new and fluid identities with their family and culture (Berríos-Allison, 2011; Garcia & Alexander, 2012).**

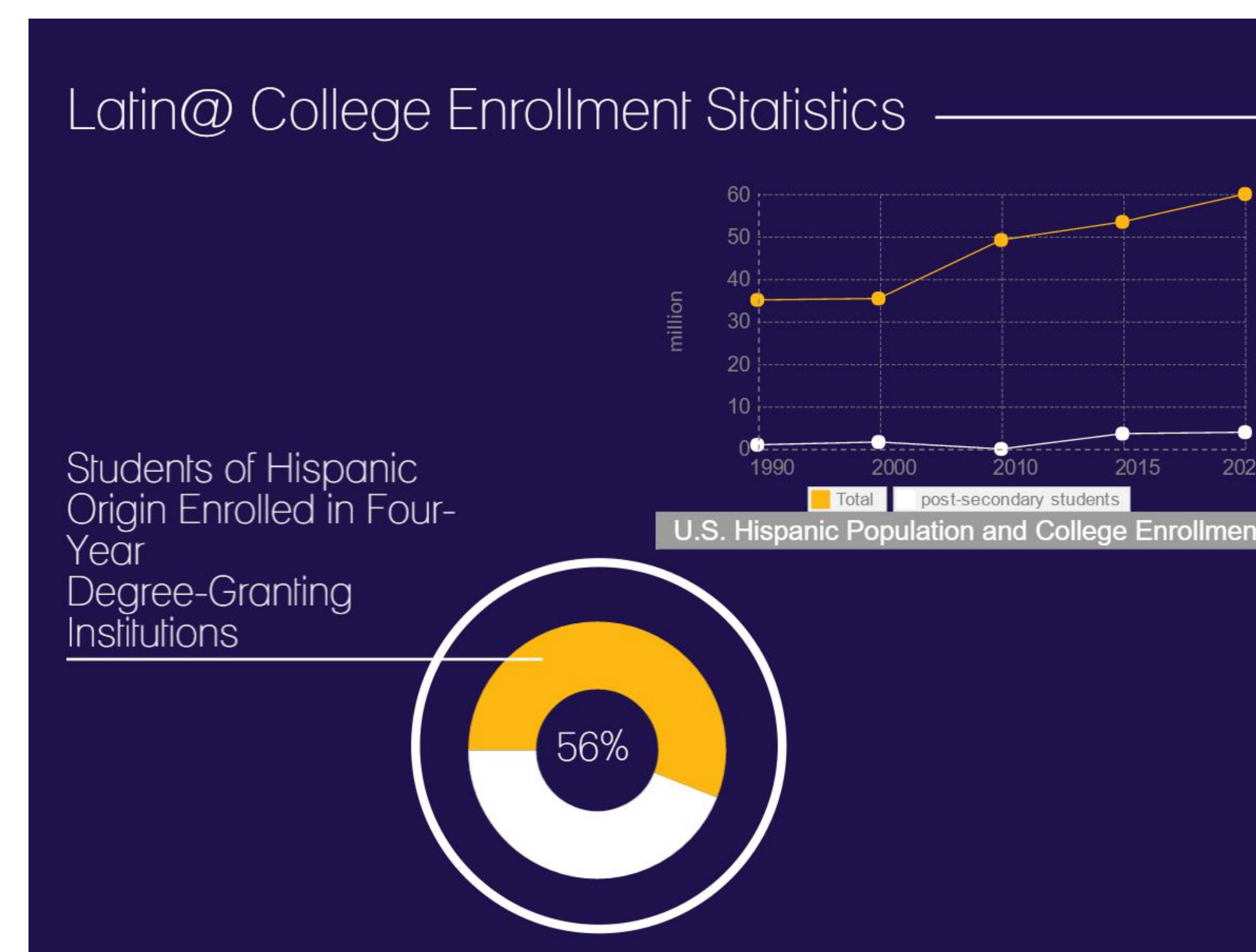


Figure 1  
Sources:  
Fry, R. & Taylor, P. (2013). *Hispanic High School Graduates Pass Whites in Rate of College Enrollment*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/03/09/hispanic-high-school-graduates-pass-whites-in-rate-of-college-enrollment>  
National Center for Education Statistics. (2014). *Projections of Education Statistics to 2022*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/2014/2014051.pdf>  
National Center for Education Statistics. (2015). Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level of enrollment, sex, attendance status, and race/ethnicity of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2014. *Digest of Education Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/2014/2014051.pdf>

## Conclusions

Counselors may employ narrative approaches with clients because they are culturally sensitive, externalize problems, and can normalize experiences by creating communities that can learn from each other's abilities and skills. However, little quantifiable evidence exists to conclusively posit narrative therapy or techniques as effective practices for college-aged Latin@s or other populations.

Therefore, a need exists for practitioners to work together to collect data on reduction or maintenance of symptoms or problems, goal attainment, and participant experience with a narrative approach to counseling.

## Findings: Unique Problems


Latin@ clients often face experiences and challenges unique from that of college-aged members of other origin or culture groups; these include:


- ⊗ Different generation levels of immigration (Ojeda & Flores, 2008)
- ⊗ Undocumented status (Cervantes, Minero, & Brito, 2015)
- ⊗ Not mastering the English language (Morales-Campos, Casillas, & McCurdy, 2008)
- ⊗ Lack of role models (Rivera, Blumberg, Chen, Ponterotto, & Flores, 2007)
- ⊗ Racial discrimination (Rivas-Drake, 2011)
- ⊗ Microaggressions (Gloria, Castellanos, Segura-Herrera, Mayorga, 2010)


## Narrative Therapy: Approaches and Techniques


Narrative therapy helps clients tell their stories, discover themes and meaning to "identify alternate ways of being that promote their goals" (Gibbon, Shurts, 2010, p. 173).

Because a major tenet of narrative therapy is externalizing the problem, it is useful for Latin@ clients who have internalized biases. The narrative approach can be used in conjunction with group counseling (Berríos-Allison, 2011). **Some specific NT techniques that may work well with college-aged Latin@s:**

 Letter writing (White & Murray, 2002) may appeal to adolescent and young adult clients because the letter is a tangible object and the client has full decision-making powers in its composition.

 Lifelines allow individuals to identify important life events and find themes by starting with a personal timeline (Gibbon, Shurts, 2010).

 Critical Race Theory (Pyne & Means, 2013, p.187) focuses on the loci of power in "majoritarian tellings of history," complements NT, and empowers the historically silenced or underrepresented.

 Care teams and leagues can work together to create collective documents while individuals can diachronically collaborate on living documents to share stories and skills (Combs & Freedman, 2012; Newman, 2008). These may be suitable for clients accustomed to significant support in their families or cultures.

## References

- Berríos-Allison, A. C. (2011). Career support group for Latino/a college students. *Journal of College Counseling, 14*, 80-95.
- Cervantes, J. M., Minero, L. P., & Brito, E. (2015). Tales of survival 101 for undocumented Latina/o immigrant university students: Commentary and recommendations from qualitative interviews. *Journal of Latina/o Psychology, 3* (4), 224-238.
- Combs, G., & Freedman, J. (2012). Narrative, poststructuralism, and social justice: Current practices in narrative therapy. *The Counseling Psychologist, 40*(7), 1033-1060.
- Garcia, V. Q., & Alexander, B. Q. (2012). *Barriers faced by Hispanic students transferring from community colleges to university: An ethnographic approach*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Gibbon, M. M., & Shurts, W. M. (2010). Combining career and couples counseling for college students: A narrative approach. *Journal of College Counseling, 13*, 169-181.
- Gloria A. M., & Rodriguez, E. R. (2000). Counseling Latino university students: Psychosociocultural issues for consideration. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 78*, 145-154.
- Gloria, A. M., Castellanos, J., Segura-Herrera, T. A., & Mayorga, M. (2010). Assessing cultural orientation, cultural fit, and help-seeking attitudes of Latina undergraduates. *Journal of College Counseling, 13*, 126-140.
- Morales-Campos, D. Y., Casillas, M., & McCurdy, S. A. (2009). From isolation to connection: Understanding a support group for Hispanic women living with gender-based violence in Houston, Texas. *Journal of Immigrant Minority Health, 11*, 57-65.
- Newman, D. (2008). Rescuing the said from the saying of it: Living documentation in narrative therapy. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 3*, 24-34.
- Ojeda, L., & Flores, L. Y. (2008). The influence of gender, generation level, parents' education level, and perceived barriers on the educational aspirations of Mexican American high school students. *The Career Development Quarterly, 57*, 84-95.
- Pyne, K. B., & Means, D. R. (2013). Underrepresented and in/visible: A Hispanic first-generation student's narratives of college. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 6*(3), 186-198.
- Rivas-Drake, D. (2011). Ethnic-racial socialization and adjustment among Latino college students: The mediating roles of ethnic centrality, public regard, and perceived barriers to opportunity. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 40*, 606-619.
- Rivera, L. M., Blumberg, F., Chen, E. C., Ponterotto, J. G., & Flores, L. Y. (2007). The effects of perceived barriers, role models, and acculturation on the career self-efficacy and career consideration of Hispanic women. *The Career Development Quarterly, 56*, 47-61.
- U.S. Census Bureau (2015) Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf>.
- White, V. E., & Murray, M. A. (2002). Passing notes: The use of therapeutic letter writing in counseling adolescents. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 24*(2), 166-176.