



LATINO POLICY & ISSUES BRIEF

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A PATHWAY TO CHICANA/O DOCTORATE PRODUCTION

by

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Compared to all other racial/ethnic groups, Chicana/os are the most underrepresented population within doctorate production in the United States. Furthermore, even though data shows a slight increase in Chicana/o doctorate production, these gains are small in relation to the dramatic population growth of Chicana/os in the U.S. from 1990 to 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).

In considering this issue, we examine a distinct feature of Chicana/o doctorate production: nearly one-fourth of Chicana/o doctorates first attended a community college, more than two times the overall rate for all doctorates. In fact, studies show that about two-thirds of all Latina/o students begin their postsecondary career in community colleges (Ornelas 2002; Ornelas & Solórzano 2004). Indeed, community colleges have long provided three primary functions: a) vocational education/certificate programs; b) terminal Associate of Art/Science degrees; and c) transfer opportunities to four-year institutions. But even though 71% of Latina/o students who enter a community college desire to transfer to a four-year institution, only 7% to 20% end up doing so (U.S. Department of Education 2001). Of the three, the transfer function best prepares students to continue on to four-year colleges with the possibility of then continuing on to graduate and professional school. This report is a first attempt to shed some light on this little-known path to graduate school for Chicana and Chicano students.

Chicana/os Doctorate Production

Our report draws on the National Opinion Research Center's Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED). For our

analysis, we examine doctorate production in the 11-year period from 1990 to 2000 among U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

From 1990 to 2000, the rate of doctorate production for Chicanas and Chicanos in the United States increased slowly to just under 2% of overall female and male doctoral recipients (see fig. 1). Thus, despite the relative increase, Chicanas and Chicanos continue to be a relatively small proportion of doctorates produced.

Doctoral Parity Relative to Other Groups

In comparing Chicana and Chicano doctorate production to that of other racial/ethnic groups, we use a parity measure that identifies the U.S. census data among a 30-34 year-old age cohort population as a comparative baseline. Berryman (1983) argues this age cohort represents the median age at which a doctorate is awarded (i.e., 32 years old). Thus, for example, if African American females are 12.9 percent of the 30-34 age cohort and only 6.1 percent of the doctorates produced, then they are well below

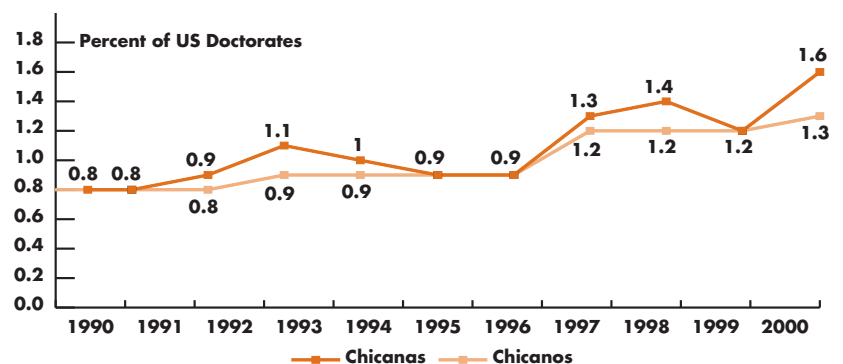


Figure 1: Chicanas and Chicanos represent a small percent of the overall female and male doctorate production in the United States. Source: SED.

parity. Similarly, if a group's age-cohort figures are lower than their earned doctorate percentages, then they are overrepresented in doctorate production.

Figure 2a reveals that while Chicanas are 6.7% of this female age cohort, they are only 1.1% of all female doctorates. Thus, Chicanas are clearly underrepresented in doctorate production and would need to

increase by 600% to reach parity with their female 30-34 year-old age cohort.

Similar to their female counterparts, Figure 2b reveals that Chicanos are also underrepresented in doctorate production. While they are 7.9% of their age-cohort, Chicanos are only 1% of overall male doctorates produced and would need to grow by almost 800% to reach parity.

Community College Origins

Chicana/os are more likely than any other racial/ethnic group to reach the doctorate by way of the community college. At 23%, Chicana/os have the highest percentage of doctorates who first attended a community college (see fig. 3). This figure is over twice that for African Americans and Whites and substantially higher than that of other Latino groups .

Chicana/o Doctorate Production by Fields

Chicanas and Chicanos who attended a community college on the pathway to the doctorate are more likely to be in the broad fields of education and the social sciences than their non-community college counterparts (see fig. 4). While nearly one-half of Chicana/os who did not attend community college will enter these two broad fields, nearly two-thirds of Chicana/os who first attend community college will do so. This disparity is most marked with respect to education, which accounts for 40% of community college doctorates.

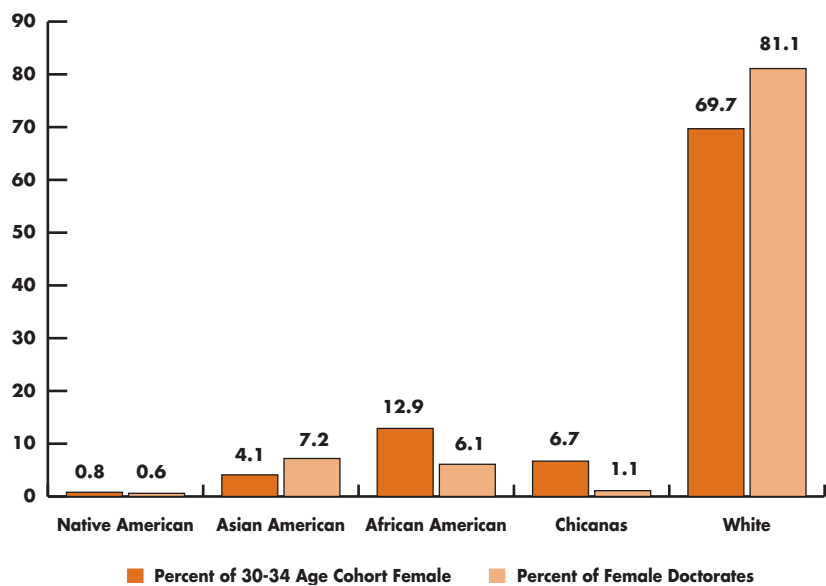


Fig. 2a. Between 1990 and 2000, Chicanas are underrepresented in doctorate production compared to their female 30-34 age cohort and to other female racial/ethnic groups.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 Census and SED.

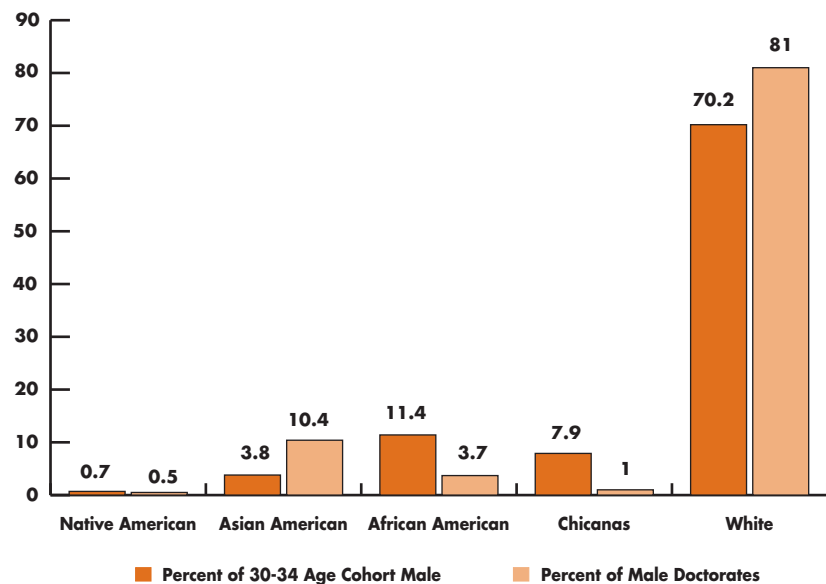


Fig. 2b. Between 1990 and 2000, Chicanos are underrepresented in doctorate production when compared to their male 30-34 age cohort and to other male racial/ethnic groups.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1990 Census and SED.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that one out of four Chicana/os attended a community college on the road to the doctorate, it is important to highlight that community colleges play an early and critical role in the encouraging and training of students who pursue graduate and professional school. Therefore, we offer these policy recommendations:

- strengthen the transfer function and work to develop a “transfer culture.”
- strengthen college and university training programs, including greater coordination between two-year and four-year colleges. (Current programs include: Minority Access to Research Careers-Undergraduate Student Training in Research [MARCUS*STAR], Minority Biomedical Research Support, McNair doctoral training programs, and *Puente*.)
- emphasize and support those disciplinary broad fields where Chicana and Chicano students are least likely to be found.

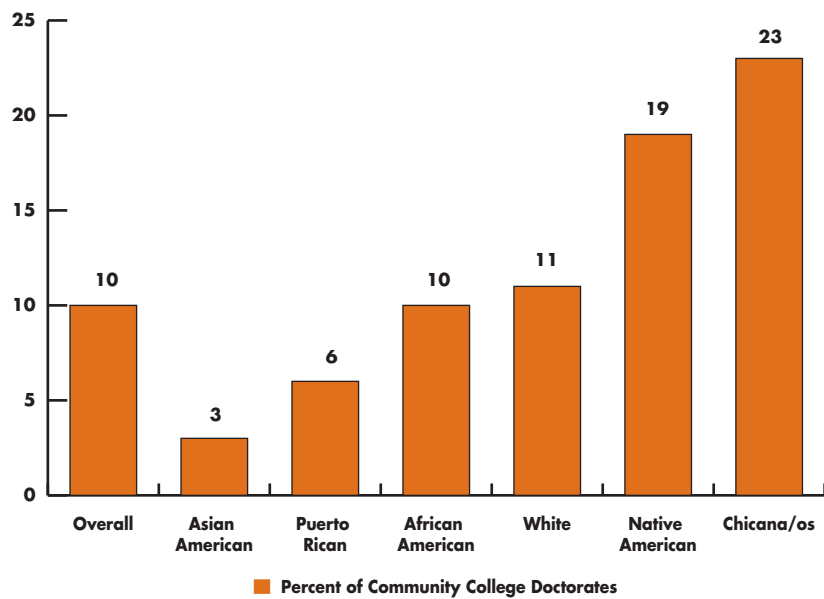


Fig. 3. Of the doctorates produced between 1990 and 2000, Chicanas/os are more likely than any of their counterparts to have attended a community college on their route to the doctorate. *Source: SED.*

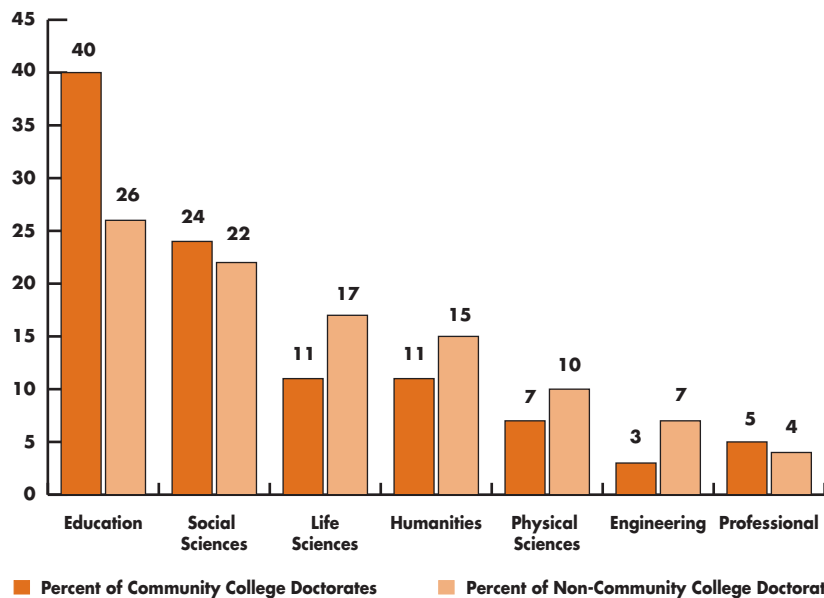


Fig. 4. Chicanas/os who went through a community college receive the majority of their doctorate degrees in education and the social sciences *Source: SED.*

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SOURCE

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE AS A PATHWAY TO CHICANA/O DOCTORATE PRODUCTION

While only 10 percent of overall U.S. doctorates attended a community college, almost 25 percent of Chicana/o doctorates did. Since Chicanas and Chicanos are the most underrepresented population within U.S. doctorate production, community colleges can play an important role in increasing Chicana/o doctorates.

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