# Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research

Vol. 8, No. 2, 2022

SPECIAL EDITION ON LATINA/O/X POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

ISSN: 2330-6459

JLER | Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research
Center for Leadership Equity and Research

ClearVoz.com

# JLER | Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research

Center for Leadership Equity and Research

The Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research (JLER) is published by the Center for Leadership, Equity, and Research (CLEAR). JLER is the research branch of CLEAR, a non-profit organization focused on eliminating the equity gap in educational settings.

JLER is focused on providing a multidisciplinary forum to provide a broad range of education professionals an avenue to share scholarly knowledge in the area of Equity and Leadership in K-20 education.

JLER aims to publish peer-reviewed manuscripts that add to the body of knowledge and focus on research and practical applications to practitioners of K-20 education and affiliated institutions. To achieve this goal, the journal seeks to promote research in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions through articles on advocacy, equity, mentoring, cultural proficiency, diversity, community engagement, and the academic, personal, and social experiences of students; professional issues focused on equity for faculty and staff; and the regulatory policies impacting such institutions.

Visit CLEAR to learn about membership, the organization's focus and activities at www.clearvoz.com.

JLER | Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research
Center for Leadership Equity and Research

# Special Editorial Board

# Table of Contents

Vol 8, No. 2
(2022)
Special Edition

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# FOREWORD: COMBATING DE-DIVERSIFYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Mahmoud Suleiman
*Editorial Director*

Let me begin with a personal note. I attended what would be labeled as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS) for my graduate studies many years ago at Arizona State University. Since I completed my undergraduate degree and credentials abroad in the Middle East, I had to spend a few years doing "practical training" during and after my graduate studies while I was learning about the American educational system and the function of PreK-12 schools. The credential requirements were embedded in my program of studies. Simultaneously, I was developing as a teacher as well as a teacher educator throughout the coursework and field experiences for several years while coping with the multiple burdens of my identity, nationality, culture, language, and other factors. In fact, a major requirement for entry to the doctoral program and qualifying for a Title VII Bilingual Fellowship was to enroll in a practicum every semester throughout my graduate studies. By the time I finished the program, I met all licensure state requirements but never officially applied for the credentials since I transitioned seamlessly to the world of higher education. This format allowed me to develop teaching experience and afforded me multiple opportunities to work in schools.

These models of "on-the-job training" have long been around under various names, albeit the subtle differences in connotations, such as clinical practica, field-based internship, clinical ghetto training, in-service training, teacher induction, co-teaching, professional development schools, and teacher residency programs among others (Badiali & Titus, 2010; Bullough et al., 1997; Rutten & Badial, 2020; Suleiman, 1998; Suleiman, 2000). For example, over three decades ago, the most common practice in teacher and educator preparation in many institutions, including the research university I attended for my graduate work, revolved around long-term clinicalization of teacher education programs (Bullough et al., 1997). As a byproduct of such programs, I found this approach to be immensely rewarding to me personally and professionally for many reasons. On the one hand, the process of clinicalizing my program of study helped me achieve a delicate balance between the conceptual knowledge and pedagogical skills needed for successful teachers and educators in diverse settings. On the other hand, the firsthand exposure and participation in the clinical training sensitized me to the school realities, allowed me to experience authentic learning-teaching contexts, and gave me the opportunity to work with the unique diversity of the

student populations, their families, and communities at large. Moreover, the intentional staffing in the program seemed strategic in attracting faculty who represent the student diversity in the PreK-20 schools and communities. I had the honor to be mentored by a group of faculty that included Latinx and Native American instructors among others. I reaped the benefits of having someone whose experiences and world views intersect with mine; for example, their mindsets reflect the historical literacy and cultural competence about the Arab and Muslim civilizations that lasted for several hundred years of reign in Andalusia, modern-day Spain since the "... east/west contact bore the most fruit wherever Arabs and Europeans lived or worked together" during which "Muslim Spain was one of the most cosmopolitan and multicultural societies in human history" (Schwartz, 2001, pp. 68-69). This global cultural proficiency helped me in connecting with students who shared my instructors' backgrounds that are different from mine (and vice versa) especially as an Arab American, a group that "America loves to hate" (see Orfalea, 1998; Suleiman, 2004) and has long become its "new scapegoats" given "the anti-Arab hysteria [that] has been building in this country for many years" (Abourezk, 1993, p. 26). Most importantly, my culturally responsive mentors and teachers helped me heed the importance of students seeing themselves in the schools they attend including institutions of higher education. Sadly, throughout my professional life, I have seen in many instances the continual attempts to de-diversify programs, curricula, and the culture in the academy including efforts aimed at de-Hispanizing the faculty and staff even when the vast majority of the students are of Latinx heritages. Even in publicly declared HSIs, many programs are still suffering because of the institutional failures that create barriers, close doors, and deny access to diverse populations, which include Latinx students and faculty. The current pronouncements towards diversity, equity, and inclusion have become no more than checklists and numbers. The academy still has a long way to go to embrace minoritized populations, including Latinx students and all other marginalized groups since the dominant culture in higher education continues to be negatively skewed against People of Color and positively favoring the mainstream White privileged populace.

The roots of the problem are multi-faceted. One lies in the fact that such institutions were established and designed to serve the "best and leave out the rest." The foundations of schools were never built with the pillars of pluralism that require multiple levels of inclusion and acculturation based on the fabric of the American society and its cultural makeup (Cortes, 1990; Grant & Gomez, 1995; Little & Mohanty, 2010; Wise, 2015; Yosso, 2005). Additionally, they were established with provincial mindsets with a large neglect of the global and international frameworks and contexts (Suleiman & Huber, 2022). Thus, students and faculty of color will have to overcome the burdens of their backgrounds to find their way into the academy by initially shattering the glass fences and ceilings facing them. Nonetheless, once they set foot into the door, they soon realize that they are not truly *members* of the institutional culture but *numbers* and statistics to satisfy system guidelines and protocols such as Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity policies. Historically, such policies have evolved as reactive measures; thus, the need for them, as some people argue, in society's institutions including PerK-20 schools is a crime; i.e., they should never have been needed in the first place. Notwithstanding, these are considered a set

of dangerous tools and sharp knives especially when they fall in the wrong hands because they have the tendency to harm innocent people (Lehman, 2010). Examples of the "sharp knives" in higher education abound and include search committees, honors and awards committees, cluster hire committees, performance review committees, tenure, and retention and promotion committees among other tools that are traditionally dominated by the mainstream members whose perspectives and expectations are at odds with students and faculty of color (Little & Mohanty, 2010). Consequently, without having to deconstruct the institutions and get rid of the systemic racism, students and faculty of color will continue to be alienated and upon entry, they become aware of the internal barriers that they must overcome in their attempt to "fit in" and develop a sense of belonging. In fact, they continue to become "relatively less secure, less embedded in the mainstream of departmental and university life" (Cantor, 2010, p. 30) which ultimately pushes them away and forces them to move on. I have seen many of my Latinx, Black, Native American, and other minoritized colleagues who left prematurely since they found themselves in the academy full of those with a "we are stuck" attitude since they feel they "have to work with those" minority peers. Thus, faculty of color have essentially been successfully "pushed out" by a system, full of dangerous tools and irresponsible interactions, that devalued their cultural and intellectual capitals.

Building upon the vision and mission of the Center for Leadership, Equity and Research (CLEAR), through JLER, we continue to amplify the realities around that exist by providing an inclusive and comprehensive vision that seeks to materialize democracy and pluralism in schools and beyond. The work is far from being complete and the march continues on as activists and social justice leaders share their experiences and speak out in face of systemic flaws and inequities that have plagued society's institutions at all levels. These voices are amplified through research and their experiences are reflected in epistemological accounts that call upon everyone to take active steps to empower all participants in the academy.

Focusing on the plight of Latinx students and faculty of color in higher education, this JLER formidable Special Edition provides a kaleidoscope of powerful accounts that highlight the experiences of Latinx populations and their long, hard struggle toward equity and social justice. These accounts reflect juxtapositions outlined in a previous special edition focusing on the place of Latinx students in PreK-12 settings. Together, these empirical artifacts are steeped into the social stratification and sociocultural phenomena that illustrate how all sorts of system gaps continue to deprive People of Color of their basic rights to integrate in America's pluralistic institutions. The stories of the contributing scholars focusing on Latinx struggles speak of the bigger narrative that the deficit models and provincial mindsets continue to harm everyone who is outside the privileged mainstream affiliations and tribal belongings. At the same time, we are all called upon to reject provincialism and promote global perspectives (see Suleiman & Huber, 2022) in order to become effective local-global action-oriented professionals.

Readers of this special edition will find a rich collection of thought-provoking articles on issues with which everyone can identify unless they are numb to the passive empty rhetorical pronouncements about equity and social justice. More importantly, readers who are in leadership positions should heed the implications gleaned from each article and leverage their positions, roles,

and responsibilities to take concrete action instead of using their positions as sharp knives and tools for maintaining the status quo of inequities and injustices.

Finally, on behalf of the JLER team, we are grateful to all partners for preparing this special issue as well as the contributors, reviewers, and everyone who assisted in the production of this exceptional edition.

**REFERENCES**

Abourezk, J. G. (1993). The Arab scare: When the heat is on, Arab Americans lose their rights. *The Progressive, 57*(5), 26-29.

Badiali, B., & Titus, N. E. (2010). Co-teaching: Enhancing student learning through mentor-intern partnerships. *School-University Partnerships, 4*(2), 74-80.

Bullough, R., Hobbs, S., Kauchak, D., Crow, N., & Stokes, D. (1997). Long-term PDS development in research universities and the clinicalization of teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 48*(2), 85-95. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487197048002002

Cantor, N. (2010). Universities and democratic culture. In D. Little & S. Mohanty (Eds.), *The future of diversity: Academic leaders reflect on American higher education (pp. 19-40).* Palgrave and Macmillan.

Cortés, C. (1990). E pluribus unum: Out of many one. *California Perspectives, 1*, 13-16.

Grant, C. A., & Gomez, M. L. (Eds.). (1996). *Making schooling multicultural: Campus and classroom.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Lehman, J. (2010). From diverse campuses to integrated campuses: How can we tell if we are "walking the walk"? In D. Little & S. Mohanty (Eds.), *The future of diversity: Academic leaders reflect on American higher education (pp. 51-68).* Palgrave and Macmillan.

Little, D., & Mohanty, S. P. (2010). *The future of diversity: Academic leaders reflect on American higher education.* Palgrave and Macmillan.

Orfalea, G. (1998). *Before the flames: A quest for the history of Arab Americans*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Rutten, L., & Badiali, B. (2020). Why they teach: Professional Development School teacher candidates' initiating motivations to become teachers. *School-University Partnerships, 13*(1), pp. 12-21.

Schwartz, R. (2001). Unity in multiplicity: Lessons from Alhambra. *Thought and Action, 17*(1), 63-75.

Suleiman, M., & Huber, T. (Eds.). (2022*). Beyond provincialism: Promoting global competencies in teacher and educator preparation.* Information Age Publishing.

Suleiman, M. (2004). Image making and invisible minorities. In G. Goodman & K. Carey, *Critical multicultural conversations*, (pp. 79-91). Cresskill, NY: Hampton Press, Inc.

Suleiman, M. (2000). Standards-based induction programs: Implications for teacher training and support. ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education.

Suleiman, M. (1998). TEAM-ing together through field experiences: Implications for teacher education. ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education.

Wise, T. (2015). *Under the affluence: Shaming the poor, praising the rich, and sacrificing the*

*future of America*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Publishers.

Yosso , T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 1

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL EDITION ON LATINA/O/X POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Advancing Organizational and Institutional Opportunities Aimed to Disrupt Deficit Narratives and Expand Latina/o/x Postsecondary Education Success

Leticia Oseguera
*The Pennsylvania State University*

Gilberto Q. Conchas
*The Pennsylvania State University*

Marco A. Murillo
*Santa Clara University*

Current discourses around race have resulted in increased racism and violence in universities (Conchas & Acevedo, 2020; Pérez-Huber & Muñoz, 2021). Anti-blackness, racial injustices, a global pandemic, and a national racial reckoning are the current conditions of Pre-K to postsecondary education. Coupled with this education reality are continued rising price tags of postsecondary education, high loan debt, and persistent challenges for higher education institutions to attract, enroll, retain, and graduate Latina/o/x students (Espinosa et al., 2019). Latina/o/x students are the largest racial/ethnic group enrolled in college (Fry & Taylor, 2014), yet they are only about half as likely as their white counterparts to earn a bachelor's degree (Conchas & Acevedo, 2020; Fry & Taylor, 2014). The lower attainment and representation are witnessed across several educational levels extending to graduate school and to Latina/o/x faculty presence in postsecondary institutions, which hovers at just 6% (Espinosa et al., 2019). This then reduces the likelihood of hiring Latina/o/x into senior-level administrative roles as they often come from the faculty ranks. Only 3.4% of academic department heads are Latina/o/x (Espinosa et al., 2019). The economic and social advancement of the nation is enhanced by educating Latina/o/x populations, thus, the focus of this special edition centers Latina/o/x experiences at the postsecondary level.

In Pérez-Huber and Muñoz's (2021), *Why They Hate Us: How Racist Rhetoric Impacts Education*, the editors examine the damaging educational consequences Students of Color including Latina/o/x students experience because of racist nativism, xenophobia, homophobia,

sexism, and other systemic injustices. While the conditions seem grim, the collection of articles in this special issue pushes us further than just admitting students into postsecondary education but interrogates whether we are intentional in serving students. It also challenges us to critically examine existing policies and practices to reduce the harm experienced by Latina/o/x students attending U.S. postsecondary education. While the global pandemic highlighted existing inequities already evident in postsecondary education, there are opportunities and glimmers. These works in this special issue include the voices and perspectives of scholars, practitioners, and programs pushing to disrupt inequitable practices and urge us to challenge the ways postsecondary institutions are designed to exclude Latina/o/x participation.

This special edition on Latina/o/x education is a fortuitous labor of love between the Latinx Research Center at Santa Clara University, the Center for Leadership, Equity, and Research (CLEAR), and the Pennsylvania State (Penn State) University with additional contributions from faculty affiliated with Penn State's Center for the Study of Higher Education and doctoral students from the Educational Leadership Program. This collaborative vision between Sabrina Zirkel, Dean of the School of Education and Counseling Psychology at Santa Clara University; Ken Magdaleno, Executive Director of CLEAR; Mahmoud Suleiman, Managing Editor and Editorial Director of *JLER*; and, Gilberto Q. Conchas, Wayne K. and Anita Woolfolk Hoy Endowed Professor of Educational Leadership at Penn State, reflects a platform to amplify the voice of minoritized groups through core research in educational equity, anti-racism, and social justice. This special issue also represents a process of intergenerational mentorship and extends this notion of providing Latina/o/x voice to the manuscript authors included in this special issue as it was the intentionality to support early and mid-career scholars working to center Latina/o/x voices. The original intent was to produce one special issue that concentrates on educational issues impacting Latinas/os/xs but we received several quality manuscripts that we secured permission to produce two special issues.

While the first special issue titled, *Listening to Latina/o/x Voices: Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Obstacles in Distinct Educational Contexts* focused on Latina/o/x issues across PreK-12 educational contexts inside and outside of schools, this second special issue focuses on the roles of Latina/o/x students, families, staff, and faculty and the possibilities and limitations of educational policy aimed to support Latina/o/x students as they journey through postsecondary education environments. Like the first edition which contextualized Latina/o/x experience at the PreK-12 level, this collection contextualizes the Latina/o/x experience within the historical, political, and local processes that have influenced and continue to play a role in the educational opportunity structures that Latina/o/x folks experience at the postsecondary level. The voices of students, faculty, administrators, and families of Latina/o/x students supporting them on their journey are showcased as are interrogations of institutional and statewide policy efforts. Latina/o/x students continue to be the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group but they are still underrepresented in postsecondary education and even fewer are in positions of senior leadership to address persistent challenges (Espinosa et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2021). What makes this issue a significant contribution is that the articles in this special issue each offer research aimed to

expand opportunities and disrupt deficit narratives. Together they weave a story of resilience and strength. Drawing on fields like Ethnic Studies and critical race theory, the authors in this special journal center the experiences of communities of color and other marginalized groups unapologetically and celebrate their experiences, their ways of knowing and being, and validate how they resist racist and unjust systems.

This second special edition, like the first issue examining PreK-12 schooling, brings together diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives, including empirical qualitative and quantitative manuscripts centering Latina/o/x experiences and interrogating organizational practices. The campus contexts include a mix of community college and comprehensive public and research-intensive public and private institutions across the U.S. with historically white institutional designations and Hispanic serving institutional designations. The special issue concludes with a book review examining ways for Hispanic Serving Institutions to define and live out the word "servingness" to better meet the needs of Latina/o/x populations that move beyond a numerical federal designation/definition.

This special issue opens with an explosive essay about rights to spaces and hence the university and rights to an education and how one's admittance to the university should also mean a right to the university's spaces and all the privileges associated with attending a university without being harassed or bothered. Using one Latina/o/x sub-population in the northeast, **Gonzalez** combines critical theories of public space use with lived experiences. He makes the case for why institutions need to change the ways they serve Latina/o/x populations and, more importantly, that how Latina/o/x populations want to experience the university should be delivered by the university. This article outlines how admitted students should have the right to spaces and the right to be present, but the university falls short of creating this space for ethnic minoritized students as space continues to be contested and not everyone has equal access to shared spaces. The next two manuscripts offer strategies to empower ownership over Latina/o/x populations' educational journeys and to resist inequitable structures. They celebrate and affirm the power of Latina/o/x ways of knowing and doing. The **Lara and Nava** piece is evidence of ways families support undocumented Latina/o/x student journeys in college using Home Based Pedagogies (Bernal, 2001). Specifically, the authors illustrate the valuable learnings students acquired through their families' migration, labor experiences, and resistance strategies. One of this manuscript's contributions is establishing (and celebrating) non-traditional ways of knowing and doing that occur in Latina/o/x families and homes. **Poza, Pinedo-Gangai, Barrera, Burciaga, and Pizarro's** case study on the Student Leadership Retreat for new students examines students' experiences in programming undergirded by asset-based *conocimiento* (iterative and dialogic understanding of ourselves and others), *cariño* (care for self and others), and *confianza* (trust). This manuscript illustrates the power to equip Latina/o/x students with culturally relevant and transformative strategies of ownership over learning in contrast to more traditionally individualistic, competitive, and transactional arrangements within higher education.

The second part of the special issue investigates organizational and policy reforms meant to assist in Latina/o/x students' journeys but also cautions how these efforts can be undermined.

**Contreras, Prado Robledo, and Gomez** encourage us to consider the role of a system of research universities, many of which are also designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and their role in developing more Latina/o/x faculty to then lead these institutions. Contreras and her co-authors encourage HSIs to take responsibility for cultivating the next generation of Latina/o/x faculty. They assert that this system of public research-intensive institutions has the unique opportunity to transform the social and economic infrastructure of the state by investing in Latina/o/x students at the graduate level and through efforts to diversify the faculty, staff, and leadership of the system and its campuses. The **Baca** piece examines a statewide developmental education reform initiative impacting community college students from the perspective of faculty, staff, and administration who were charged with addressing compliance with the statewide mandate that illustrates the organizational challenges of policy implementation. While the author identifies ways in which the college implemented changes to enable more Latina/o/x students to succeed, the author also uncovered negative behaviors of instructors and administration to intentionally sabotage success. This is followed by **Rolón-Dow, Covarrubias, and Guerrón Montero** who examine a Historically White Institution's (HWI) commitment to diversity. The Rolón-Dow et al. piece examines a historically white institution's commitment to diversity through an institutional lens framing and concludes that a race-informed Latina/o/x cultural consciousness is only present in shallow ways within the culture cycle of the university studied. The authors advance that a Latina/o/x cultural consciousness must be infused in all phases of the culture cycle to facilitate an understanding of Latina/o/x student perspectives, to meaningfully serve Latina/o/x students, and to extend the benefits of diversity to all students.

This special issue concludes with a book review by **Rodell** of Gina Garcia's *Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Practice: Defining Servingness of HSIs*. Rodell offers a review of the book including the multidimensional conceptual framing guiding the organization of the book and emphasizes the argument of educational policy as race-neutral and that while federal funds are allocated to serve Latina/o/x students, many fall short of this goal to reduce inequities and improve student outcomes. Rodell's review summarizes each chapter's empirically driven contribution and what lessons are learned for HSI leaders. The collection of chapters in this edited book illustrates the ways that the practitioners at various HSIs are defining and advancing "servingness" to/with their Latina/o/x populations.

*Advancing Organizational and Institutional Opportunities Aimed to Disrupt Deficit Narratives and Expand Latina/o/x Postsecondary Education Success* tackles student experiences as opportunities to disrupt the status quo. It offers those committed to leading postsecondary education institutions and those invested in addressing the inequities in such systems, the critical consciousness necessary to advance the successful experiences of Latina/o/x *gente* along their postsecondary journeys. It will appeal to university leaders, system administrators, university-based scholars, students, and policy analysts at social research institutions. It is also intended for a broader audience, including those interested in anti-racism and social justice in education. Advocates for minoritized groups will also find this research valuable as the research in this special issue identifies ways to disrupt systems not created for minoritized groups. The focus on programs

and policies geared toward success has broad appeal. There are concrete ways of re-envisioning success. This issue is a powerful collection of how groups resist and transform spaces. We hope this accompanying special issue on postsecondary education contributes to educational research and advances social justice approaches and builds on the Latinx Research Center's mission and vision of ensuring "equity-based solutions to the complex educational phenomena that build from the Latina/o/x community's strengths to promote social and economic mobility" (Latinx Research Center Website, 2020).

**REFERENCES**

Bernal, D. D. (2001). Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *14*(5), 623–639. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110059838.

Conchas, G.Q. & Acevedo-Gil, N. (2020). *The Chicana/o/x Dream: Hope, Resistance, and Educational Success.* Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

Espinosa, L. L., Turk, J.M., Taylor, M. & Chessman, H.M. (2019). *Race and ethnicity in higher education: A status report.* Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Fry, R. & Taylor, P. (2014). *High school drop-out rate at record low: Hispanic high school graduates pass Whites in rate of college enrollment.* Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

Jones, N., Marks, R., Ramirez, R., Rios-Vargas, M. (2021). *Improved race, ethnicity measures show U.S. is more multiracial*. Washington, D.C: U.S. Census Population Division.

Latinx Research Center Website (2020). Website: www.scu.edu/ecp/centers-and-partnerships/latinx-research-center-lrc/.

Perez-Huber, L. & Munoz, S.M. (Eds.) (2021). *Why they hate us. How racist rhetoric impacts education.* Teachers College Press.

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# THE RIGHT TO THE UNIVERSITY: THE EXPERIENCES OF MEXICAN/MEXICAN AMERICAN/XICANX STUDENTS AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE UNIVERSITY IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

**Martín Alberto Gonzalez**
*Portland State University*

**AUTHOR NOTE**
Thank you to the MMAX students who participated in this project and in doing so, spoke truth to power. Also, thank you to the reviewers for their thoughtful comments and feedback. Lastly, thank you to Jordan Beltran Gonzales for his editorial suggestions.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Martín Alberto Gonzalez, Portland State University, Chicano/Latino Studies, School of Gender, Race, and Nations, 1633 SW Park Ave, Portland OR 97201. Email: martgo2@pdx.edu.

**ABSTRACT**

Having the right to a space is not only the right to be present without being harassed or bothered, but it also includes the right to have a say in how that space should be experienced. Yet, spaces have long been contested and not everyone has equal access to shared spaces. This paper examines the experiences of Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) undergraduate students at a predominantly white university in the Northeast. Drawing on in-depth interviews, participant observations, *pláticas*, and document analyses, I argue that MMAX students do not have the right to their respective university because their university does not address their specific needs as Students of Color. The denial of the right to their university is experienced through a lack of resources and institutional support. This includes, but is not limited to, (a) Inconsiderate University Investment Patterns; (b) Inadequate University Services; (c) Unequal Housing Accessibility; and (d) Unfair Treatment by Campus Police.

***Keywords***: racism in higher education, Mexican students, race and space, specific-need services

## Introduction

In recent years there has been an increase of People of Color[1] making their way into spaces and settings previously occupied only by whites. This is especially the case in the realm of post-secondary education (i.e., higher education). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the greatest increase in terms of undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions was between 2000 and 2014, in which Hispanic student enrollment more than doubled (a 119% increase from 1.4 million to 3.0 million students)[2], Black student enrollment increased by 57% (from 1.5 million to 2.4 million students), and white student enrollment increased by 7% (from 9.0 million to 9.6 million students).[3] Since higher education has historically served whites, the shift in racial demographics and increase in presence of Students of Color in previously all-white educational spaces gives rise to a plethora of barriers for Students of Color.

Students of Color find themselves navigating a foreign space when attending a predominantly white university and they experience racism and other forms of discrimination because of their identities (Yosso et al., 2009).[4] For instance, González (2002) found that there was a lack of Latinx representations within the social, physical, and epistemological worlds of a predominantly white campus environment, which resulted in cultural deprivation, isolation, and alienation for Latinx students. Such finding is not surprising if you take into consideration that many universities were established and have historically remained accessible exclusively for whites only (Wilder, 2014). Thus, universities' hegemonic structures, practices, and ideologies help reproduce white students' privileged status while reaffirming the subordinate statuses of Students of Color (Cabrera, 2014; González, 2002; Gusa, 2010; Lipsitz, 1995; Muñoz, 2009). In this way, Students of Color find themselves constantly battling for space at their respective universities (Andrade, 2018).

In this article, I use qualitative research methods including in-depth interviews, *pláticas,* and participant observations to examine the racialized experiences of 20 Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) students at a private, historically and predominantly white university in the Northeast.[5] Through the lens of critical race spatial analysis (CRSA), I analyze MMAX students' experiences with racism and I argue that MMAX students' specific needs as historically marginalized students are not met by university services. Specifically, I use the concept of having the right to a city or space to explore the various ways MMAX students are denied access to space and joyful experiences at their respective university. Given that all 20 participants expressed to me that none of them felt represented on campus and very few felt supported, I engaged in a project to examine the following two research questions: (a) How do MMAX students make sense of and navigate predominantly white spaces on campus? (b) How does the university's policy decisions, infrastructure, services, and cultural symbols impact the sense of belonging of MMAX students?

## Contested Spaces: Race and Space

> We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality

> of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology. (Soja, 1989, p. 6)

As alluded to by Soja, space is very complex and political. According to Monreal (2021), space(s) is/are defined as "the meeting point(s) of different relations" where "such relational 'meeting points' are inherently social and include, but are not limited to, encounters with/between physical places and landscapes, people, events, groups, imaginations, histories, and institutions" (p. 5). Yet, space is, more times than not, taken-for-granted. To a non-geographer, public space is a space that everyone has access to. To put it simply, it is open to the *public*, without any hesitation or contingency. In essence, in a perfect world, public space is a space in which people could move freely and interact with the environment without any fear of facing any ramifications for their "normative" actions and behavior as long as they adhere to societal mores and norms (such as decent exposure, i.e., wearing clothes). Further, the tailoring of public space towards the needs of a specific population has drastically changed the meaning of space in general.

To be sure, theorizing about public space is far more complex than one can imagine. For instance, Goheen (1994) reminds us that public space is always a negotiation, and some people benefit from it more than others. As a matter of fact, it has been speculated that all social space is at some level exclusionary (Mitchell & Staeheli, 2009). Moreover, Mitchell (1997) asserts that public space is not only a site for continual negotiations of the nature of "the public" and democracy, but also is itself a product of these negotiations (p. 327). While public spaces are sites of contestations and negotiations in which two respective ideological parties appear to have a say, like any ordinary negotiation, one party's needs and interests are prioritized and thereafter fulfilled at the expense of the others. This is especially the case when spaces are racialized and those who are "othered" make their way into these racialized spaces that are not "designated" for them. To this end, Pérez (2020) reminds us, "All space is racialized, gendered, and classed, and acts to transmit dominant narratives that when unmediated serve to normalize systems of power and privilege" (p. 1).

Undeniably, race and space intersect and condition each other (Delaney, 2002). Mitchell (2000) argues that race is constructed in and through space, just as space is often constructed through race. Thus, the co-production of race and space is never uncontested. Spaces and places have different functions for different people. The racial identity of a group of people plays a major role in influencing what a space will look like and how people will interact with it. Thus, spaces and places become racialized. Miles describes racialization as "those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectives" (as cited in Calmore, 1995, p. 1235). In essence, Calmore (1995) asserts racialization is "a 'dialectical process of signification' that reaches to the societal processes in which people participate and to the structures and institutions that people produce" (p. 1235). Extending on this definition specifically in relation to the racialization of space, Calmore maintains that this is the process by which location and community are carried and placed on racial identity.

Keeping in mind the function of race in space and place gives us a better understanding of

how we attribute meaning and value to distinct racialized spaces. In fact, because race and space have always played key factors in accessing opportunities in the United States, Lipsitz (2007) encourages readers to pay close attention to how white people's spatial interests are almost always put at the forefront and privileged, while historically marginalized communities' interests are often neglected and not taken seriously. He attributes this to the constant tension between Black and white spatial imaginaries. While a white spatial imaginary is based on exclusivity and augmented exchange value, ultimately functioning as a central mechanism for skewing opportunities and life chances in the United States, the Black spatial imaginary favors public expenditures for public needs, essentially helping to combat unfavorable exposure to dismal living conditions. In this way, interests conflict via imagination of what space should look like and who it should serve for what reasons.

To better understand the racialization of space, specifically the notion of how most spaces privilege a particular set of people (whites), one must understand how race (specifically whiteness) operates in the United States in a broader sense. While race is most frequently examined as a social construct (i.e., simply a notion that has been human-made), it has real-life outcomes and consequences. The historic and current invisibility of whiteness in the United States has blinded us from its great influential presence, thus inhibiting us pinpointing it and disrupting it. Unsurprisingly, Dyer (1988) insists "white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (p. 44). Because of this, whiteness can play a major role in various aspects of human life without being acknowledged or called on for its influence. For example, Pulido (2000) encourages us to rethink environmental racism in *relation* to white privilege not only because it is a distinct form of racism that underlies institutional and overt racism, but also because it "allows us to see how the racial order works to the benefit of whites" (p. 537). According to Pulido, thinking about environmental racism differently through a white privilege lens allows for us to better understand the various ways whites accrue environmental benefits by way of their whiteness. Often, this happens at the expense of People of Color in highly racialized society such as the US. If we adhere to Pulido's reconceptualization of environmental racism, where white privilege is at the forefront in illustrating the inevitable environmental benefits whites have access to, then higher education—specifically a predominantly white university—becomes a primary site where these benefits are accumulated.

Theorizing unique perspectives of whiteness helps us better recognize not only its exclusiveness, but also the perpetual warranting of benefits attached to whiteness. In her groundbreaking piece, "Whiteness as Property," Harris (1993) suggests that because whites could not be enslaved or held as slaves, their white identity and whiteness served as sources of protection and privileges. Thus, the absence of these respective protectors meant being the object of property. Further, since only white possession and occupation of land was validated, it was thereafter privileged as the basis of property of rights. In this way, Harris (1993) maintains that possession, which is the basis for rights in property, was defined to include only the cultural practices of whites (p. 1721). Therefore, we must allow for an examination of property rights to inform how we think about the rights that are attached to whiteness. To embody characteristics of whiteness is to be

afforded rights metaphysically equivalent to property, such as the right to exclude, which is not necessarily given to those who do not embody characteristics of whiteness.

Knowing that there are both material and non-material benefits and advantages attached to whiteness warrants exclusivity and protection. This is made clear by Lipsitz (1995), who argues that there is an obvious possessive investment in whiteness, yet white people often reject it. Because there are policies put forth and sustained in their favor, there is not a need to disrupt the system, so to speak. Moreover, Lipsitz is adamant that those who are "white" are part of the race problem and can only become part of the solution if they recognize that as being true, which he attributes not necessarily to their race, but rather, their possessive investment in whiteness (p. 384). Ultimately, according to Lipsitz, it would behoove us as to acknowledge our society's possessive investment in whiteness because failure to do so hides the devastating costs of disinvestment in America's infrastructure and keeps us from facing our responsibilities to reinvest in human capital for everyone. Since whiteness yields actual economic, social, and spatial benefits only for those who appear as phenotypically white, those who are not seen as white suffer severely—both implicitly and explicitly.

## Higher Education as a Hostile Space

If race is produced by space, then it takes places for racism to take place (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 5). Higher education, specifically a predominantly white university, is a prime example in which we see the structural benefits of being white unfold while we simultaneously witness how detrimental it is to be a Person of Color in an exclusively white university. A great case in point is underscored by Inwood and Martin (2008), who carefully illustrate the various ways racialized landscapes of universities are "whitewashed." In other words, racialized landscapes at universities inadvertently privilege whiteness even though they are perceived as nondiscriminatory to all its students. Yet and still, this white mainstream ideology in higher education is discriminatory toward Students of Color and is perpetuated through its denial, or what Gusa (2010) coins as *white institutional presence.* Likewise, in shedding light on landscape and architecture-based racism on university campuses, Muñoz (2009) argues that universities' seemingly neutral decisions about establishing a welcoming campus environment perpetuate and reward white-normative behavior.

Upon arriving to campus, Students of Color must learn to navigate spaces on campuses that are designed to preserve whiteness and the status quo (Pérez, 2020). The complexity of navigating "white" and "Black" spaces is made clearer by Anderson (2015), who asserts that "the racially black and white homogeneous spaces on either side of that line promote a basic confusion between race and class; Black skin is typically equated with lower-class status and white skin with privilege" (p. 19). Moreover, in speaking about exclusivity of "white spaces" in particular, Anderson (2015) argues that "the negative image of the iconic ghetto and the notion that all Blacks come from the ghetto serve to justify the normative sensibility of the white space that excludes or marginalizes Blacks, and in which Blacks are unexpected, and when present require explanation" (p. 19). Importantly, Anderson posits that although white people usually avoid Black space, Black people are required to navigate the white space as a condition of their existence. While Anderson's

poignant spatial analysis adheres to the Black-white binary, Guerrero (2017) reminds us that non-Black People of Color are also racialized and must navigate hostile spaces in ways that overlap or are similar, even though specific anxieties (like language barriers, citizenship status, and so on) are projected onto each group. Nonetheless, navigating white spaces is neither easier said than done and often results in a tremendous psychological toll on People of Color (Pierce, 1970; Smith et al., 2007).

In attempting to navigate predominantly white spaces at universities, Students of Color experience "racial microaggressions" (Yosso et al., 2009), which ultimately result in emotional, mental, and physical strain. Students of Color experience additional complications often having to do with their race, which are emotionally and physically draining, what Smith (2004) refers to as "racial battle fatigue." For example, Harwood et al. (2012) discovered that even in residential halls at universities, Students of Color are not free from racial discrimination. Specifically, they identified four themes revolving around racial microaggressions: (a) racial jokes and verbal comments; (b) racial slurs written in shared spaces; (c) segregated spaces and unequal treatment; and (d) denial and minimization of racism. Minikel-Lacocque (2013) also found similar results in her study where Students of Color experienced the following at their respective predominantly white university: getting stared at and feeling isolated; online hatred; ignored at bus stop and angry bus driver; stereotyping; and insensitivity and ignorance. As any ordinary college students, Students of Color undergo many adverse circumstances throughout their studies; however, unlike white college students, many Students of Color are immediately racialized and constantly questioned about their academic abilities (Smith et al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2009). These racial microaggressions serve as a reminder that a racially hostile campus environment certainly keeps race in its place (Solórzano et al., 2002).

## The Right to a Space: A City or University

What does it mean to have the right to a city or a space? Responses vary depending on whom you talk to or whom you read. Most notably, associating it to a "cry and demand," the right to city is a notion put forth by Lefebvre (1996 [1967]), who argued that the right to the city means that you have a fundamental right to participate in the making of the city, that is, in shaping its every single aspect. Furthermore, in addition to co-constructing a city, Lefebvre (1991) adds that it also includes "the right to information, the rights to use of multiple services, the right of users to make known their ideas on the space and time of their activities in urban areas; it would also cover the right to the use of the center" (p. 34). Building on this notion, Mitchell (2003) insists that the right to the city is dependent upon public space, to which he prompts us to question who has the right to. Focusing on houseless people in public and the attempts to regulate them out of existence, Mitchell (2003) argues that a right to a public space such as a city must entail "the right to inhabit, to appropriate, and to control. And it must be affected through radical wrestling of power and a much fuller democratization of public space" (p. 9). In this way, the right to a space is not only the right to be present without being harassed or bothered, but it also includes the right to have a say.

To this, Harvey (2003) posits that the right to the city "is not merely a right of access to

what the property speculators and state planners define, but an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart's desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image" (p. 941). Further, to be clear as to whose rights need to be considered, Mitchell (2003) notes the following:

> Struggle for social justice in the city—for the right to the city—must therefore seek to establish a different kind of order, one built not on the fears of the bourgeoisie but on the needs of the poorest and most marginalized residents. (p. 9)

Evidently, as is, not everyone has an equal right to the city or public space. The exclusivity and neediness that ultimately fulfills expectations for the rich, erode the very "common understanding" nature of public space. The contradiction lies on the mere fact that public space has been shaped to the extent that only some (the rich and white) are afforded the freedom to interact with the environment in ways in which people have thought about public space (such as hanging out in the streets), while others (poor and mostly People of Color) are hyper-policed and constantly regulated because of their mere presence in these same spaces. Because of this quandary and many others, Marcuse (2009) points out a limitation and encourages us to think critically about what the right to the city even means by asking the following questions: Whose right are we talking about? What right do we mean? What city is it to which we want the right? (p. 189). Since some people already have the right to the city and spaces, Marcuse encourages us to think about those who have been materially and culturally excluded from the city and put their interests at the forefront in combatting already existing ideologies and fulfilled interests.

Regardless of whether students are on scholarships or paying out of pocket for their tuition, an enrolled student at a university is exactly that—an enrolled student—which should yield a relatively pleasant university campus experience and access to immediate resources such as classes, libraries, online databases, and so on. Still, Yosso et al. (2009) remind us that "in most university brochures, college represents a time of unbridled optimism, exciting challenges, and myriad opportunities. Few students would anticipate that their university experience might be marked by ongoing racialized and gendered incidents questioning their academic merit, cultural knowledge, and physical presence" (p. 659). Certainly, according to Yosso et al., "recruitment brochures would not advertise a campus climate wherein whites enjoy a sense of entitlement, while students of color face charges of being unqualified and 'out of place'" (p. 660).

In thinking about the notion of having a right to a city or space, from the perspective of a Student of Color, what does it mean to have a right to the university? That is, how can Students of Color interact with their campus environment freely and/or have a say at a predominantly white university without being impeded physically or psychology because of their mere presence? At first glance, the university seems to be accessible in every way, shape, or form to every single enrolled student; however, after a nuanced analysis this might not be the case at all. Unfortunately, historically marginalized individuals like Students of Color have drastically different experiences interacting with and accessing the university, along with its self-proclaimed abundant resources.

The denial of the right to a university is experienced through a lack of resources and institutional support. This includes, but is not limited to, a lack of courses and events tailored

toward the needs of Students of Color and insufficient/ineffective school resources because university staff are not equipped to assist recipients appropriately. In the following sections, I provide various examples that epitomize multiple ways MMAX students do not have a right to their respective university via institutional invisibility and lack of resources, or institutional microaggressions (Yosso et al., 2009), which include: (a) Inconsiderate University Investment Patterns; (b) Inadequate University Services; (c) Unequal Housing Accessibility; and (d) Unfair Treatment by Campus Police.

## Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Spatial Analysis

We are unable to address and eliminate the various ways white supremacy permeates spaces in higher education if we do not have a critical theoretical lens that can help us shed light on the various systemic barriers that impede Students of Color from thriving at their respective universities. To this end, Veléz and Solórzano (2017) employ tenets of critical race theory to suggest that the role of race, racism, and white supremacy must be accounted for as important facets in all educational spaces. In doing so, they propose critical race spatial analysis (CRSA), which is an explanatory framework and methodological approach that "works toward identifying and challenging racism and white supremacy within [geographical and social] spaces as a part of a larger goal of identifying and challenging all forms of subordination" (p. 20). In particular, Veléz and Solórzano insist CRSA in educational research requires the following:

> 1) foregrounding the color-line, underscoring the relationship between race, racism, memory and space, its intersection with other forms of subordination, and its material impact on the daily lives of Communities of Color;
> 2) challenging race-neutral representations of space by exposing how racism operates to construct space in ways that limit educational opportunity for Communities of Color;
> 3) focusing research, curriculum, practice, and activism on mapping the spatial expression of the lived experiences of Communities of Color and constructing a socio- spatial narrative that portrays these experiences as sources of strength;
> 4) centering a transformative solution by reimagining spatial research and teaching tools that work for racial justice and expands the reach and use of these tools to eliminate subordination in and beyond the academy;
> 5) utilizing the transdisciplinary knowledge base of Critical Race studies in education as well as visual sociology, critical geography, and radical/tactical cartography to inform praxis; and
> 6) emphasizing maps and map-making as a point of departure for analyzing the socio-spatial relationship between race and space and refusing to allow maps to speak for themselves. (p. 21)

Unquestionably, CRSA's adherence to critical race theory (CRT) principles makes it a vital instrument to capture the unique, continuously overlooked and intentionally dismissed experiences of those historically marginalized in higher education spaces while simultaneously scrutinizing sociopolitical and institutional structures impacting postsecondary access and success (Ledesma

& Calderón, 2015). Furthermore, the centering of a spatial consciousness framework adds nuance to our telling of everyday life in the oppressive terrain of higher education as it exposes spatial patterns of unjust resource distribution impacting Latinxs (Veléz et al., 2021). Specifically, CRT's role in higher education then becomes "instrumental in providing a voice for students who are otherwise not heard, thus allowing students to provide their own perspectives on their educational experiences" (Teranishi, 2002, as cited in Ledesma & Calderón, 2015, p. 218).

In this process, CRSA points to the disjuncture between theory and praxis. In theory, higher education supposedly strives for inclusivity and welcome-ness. In practice, however, higher education adopts practices, norms, and policies that clearly inhibit the success of Latinxs and other Students of Color (Solórzano et al., 2005). Because of this, this theoretical framework allows me to analyze higher education to identify and prevent unanticipated negative university experiences endured by Students of Color that are marked by ongoing racialized and gendered incidents, which ultimately question their academic merit, cultural knowledge, and physical presence (Yosso et al., 2009). In addition to using my own personal experiences and cultural intuition as a Xicano (Delgado Bernal, 1998), CRSA served a valuable analytical framework that helped me analyze the data to not only shed light on harsh realities of MMAX students at SCU, but also to challenge the racism and white supremacy that infiltrates spaces in higher education. As such, this theoretical frame allowed for an analysis of the MMAX students' descriptions of racial and spatial relations at SCU that revealed spaces of exclusion and marginality.

## The Setting and Context

This research draws on data that was collected from a multi-year research study that was conducted at Snow City University (SCU), which is a private historically and predominantly white university in the Northeast.[6] Out of the total undergraduate student population of 15,226 students, 56.9% of SCU's students were white. Latinx/Hispanic students comprised only 9.1% of the entire undergraduate student population. Faculty of Color made up less than 10%; Latinx/Hispanic faculty made up just 2%. In the three-year span of my study, multiple student protests resulted from videos of white students using racial slurs and multiple hate speech written on university property, which ultimately gave rise to major racial turmoil across campus. Unsurprisingly, at university-held hearings, several MMAX students expressed that they have personally experienced and observed both subtle and explicit discrimination on campus. Mostly Students of Color filled these forums to express concerns about the racially hostile campus climate hosted by the university.

## Methods

### Data Collection

From 2017 to 2020, I conducted a critical collaborative ethnography (Bhattacharya, 2008) at SCU. Critical collaborative ethnography is heavily grounded in and informed by critical ethnography (Madison, 2005). Bhattacharya (2008) defines critical collaborative ethnography as a practice of ethnography that is invested in questioning the boundaries and power relations

between the researcher and researched for the specific purpose of bringing about social action and social change. In this way, research becomes reciprocal and thereafter beneficiary for both parties, so to speak. This collaborative approach also directly challenges the problem of speaking for others (Alcoff, 1991). Critical collaborative ethnography is politically motivated and emphasizes the need to affect social change. It often involves more than a single researcher; that is, the subjects of the study are actively involved. Even when there is only one researcher, he/she/they work in multiple nonacademic settings. In my case, participants were involved to whatever extent they were comfortable from picking their own pseudonyms to editing their responses and providing feedback on data analyses and writing. Lastly, a critical collaborative ethnography links academic scholarship with "real world" experiences and it must focus on researcher positionality and accountability (Alcoff, 1991; Bhattacharya, 2008). I strategically chose to conduct a collaborative research project because it is my priority to not only engage in research that empowers my community and others alike, but also to share my knowledge on how to do so with first-generation underrepresented students. During the data collection process, I mentored numerous participants not only through their community-based research projects, but also through their research grant, graduate school, scholarship, and work applications.

**Context and Participants**

Through this critical collaborative ethnography, I worked closely with the members of ¡Poder Xicanx![7], a Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx-based student organization that was recently established by a group of students who wanted to educate the university community about the richness and diversity of the Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx culture through workshops, screenings, lectures, music, and so on. Thus, I used purposive sampling for this study in that the 20 participants were recruited based upon their affiliations with ¡Poder Xicanx! The participants included 20 Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx, specifically 7 who identify as males, 11 as females, and 2 as gender-nonconforming. The class standing of these students was diverse: 7 were alumni, as well as 1 fifth-year student, 4 fourth-year students, 4 third-year students, and 4 second-year students. Out of all students, only 1 had transferred from a community college, while everyone else came to this university straight from high school. It is important to note that although 7 participants were alumni at the time of the interview, I had worked with them previously for at least a year.

Throughout the multi-year data collection process (participants observations) and collective experiences (group meetings and get togethers), I familiarized myself with every participant in this study. Students were enrolled in and/or graduated from a variety of majors, including: Economics, Bioengineering, Political Science, Television, Film, & Radio, Philosophy, Communications Design, Education, Geography, Environmental Science, African American Studies, History, Entrepreneurship and Emerging Enterprises, Marketing, English and Textual Studies, Mechanical Engineering, Wildfire Science, Latin American Studies, Spanish, Religion, and Civil Engineering.

**Data Sources and Collection Procedures**

The participants agreed to share their stories regarding their experiences at a historically, predominantly white university and were subsequently interviewed one-on-one, with each interview lasting 45 minutes to over 2 hours. I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant via telephone or in person in order to capture their experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The semi-structured interviews included probing questions and focused on racial microaggressions, sense of belonging, and creating space(s) to challenge negativity. I also hosted multiple formal and informal *pláticas* to continue our familial traditions and naturally delve deep into conversations about resisting and navigating hostile academic spaces (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2009). The in-depth interviews and *pláticas* were digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis. Once interviews and *pláticas* were transcribed, I created an initial set of codes by going through the transcripts/notes and coding the major themes from the data, then returning the codes to the participants for member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Interviews were supplemented by various forms of data, including SCU's student-run newspaper articles, student-led public forums on racism, participant observations (attending and participating in organization's meetings), existing research articles and books on racism in higher education, university-sponsored lectures and seminars with esteemed faculty and pedagogues, and my own personal experiences.

## Inconsiderate University Investment Patterns

The decisions made by a university revolving around which initiatives and programs to support and to what extent reveal where the university stands politically. For example, in his thought-provoking podcast, "Food Fight," Gladwell (2016) investigates the relationship between the food a university serves in its cafeteria and its commitment to creating educational opportunities for poor underrepresented students. More specifically, Gladwell found an important correlation: the less a university invested in their food options, the more financial aid opportunities it created for poor underrepresented students. Unsurprisingly, universities can create more opportunities for poor underrepresented students if they decide to spend their budget differently. Such actions insinuated the neglect Students of Color have faced at the hand of administrators who are sneaky and complicit with students' differential experiences. These actions manifest themselves as institutional microaggressions, which are microaggressions that result because of the actions or inactions on behalf of the university evidenced in structures, practices, and discourses that endorse a campus racial climate hostile to Students of Color (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 673).

In a span of three years, there were many student teach-ins, rallies, and protests regarding the inconsiderate spending patterns of SCU. A huge topic of discussion was the approval and construction of a multimillion-dollar promenade walkway during a time when several initiatives and programs for underrepresented students were cut financially. For instance, Diana knew the promenade was a terrible idea, yet she was not surprised by it:

> [The promenade] was a horrible idea. Yeah, I mean, just everything about it—six million dollars while there're being cuts on other programs for Students of Color, is just . . . It's

> just expected, you know? At this point . . .

To Diana, it was not surprising that the university was investing in its infrastructure more so than it was on Students of Color. During her time at SCU, she witnessed various initiatives and programs that specifically supported Students of Color vanish gradually.

Echoing Diana's response, Sway also questioned SCU's priorities. They stated:

> The ridiculous amount of money that was invested into [the promenade] just feels insane. Feels like why is that money not going somewhere else? . . . It doesn't feel like the university cares about its students if that's what it invests money on. They're investing money on infrastructure, and infrastructure is not gonna matter to me when I walk away.

Sway points to the mere fact that a nice-looking campus does not guarantee that everyone will have a pleasant experience there. Instead, Sway calls for an investment in things that will matter to them while they are a student on campus.

Similarly, Cesar also expressed his grievances about investing in a multimillion-dollar walkway. He stated:

> The promenade is not representative at all. I remember when it was first proposed. Students of Color were outraged, just because they were spending, how much again? . . . $6 million, right? $6 million on a walkway, where that money could've been going to something that the university could've needed, or financial aid could've gotten a boost.

Rather than spending money on a fancy sidewalk, Cesar suggested that the university could have spent its money on something else that is more beneficial, namely in financial aid to help support students. Cesar struggled financially during his time at SCU, so he thinks it is very important to support students not only academically and socially, but also financially through scholarships and grants. Many Students of Color at SCU knew that the administration had cut programs that benefitted Students of Color. It was public knowledge made possible by students who were directly impacted by the cuts. Antonio was part of one of the programs—CREW, a nationally recognized program that had students from various cities. At one point, CREW had over 100 students on SCU campus, mostly Students of Color, but over time, the numbers dwindled. Fortunately, his CREW chapter at SCU did not get cut.

Antonio was adamant that CREW students contributed greatly to the university's campus climate, in and out classrooms. When asked about what it meant that the university was cutting programs and initiatives meant for Students of Color, Antonio stated:

> For me, I see it as cutting off leaders that can make a difference, that can actually change the culture here on campus for Students of Color. They're presidents of clubs, they're student marshals . . . They're the opposite of mediocre. These are badass students. And so [the Chancellor] took away . . . his administration took away the Atlanta program and he took away the Los Angeles program.

Antonio admitted that he thinks the program was cut because it was "a threat" to the university and could have changed the campus culture. It did not make sense to him that the program was so successful in supporting Students of Color, and then, all of a sudden, it was cut by SCU's administration. In addition to cutting CREW's funding, the Chancellor's administration also

defunded the Law Racial Justice Initiative, an initiative housed in the SCU Law School that worked to identify and advocate for victims of unsolved racist crimes. Even though it received national attention because of its success and contributions to judicial hearings regarding racial hate crimes, it was cut without any justification. The Law Racial Justice Initiative provided hands-on experience for current law students, especially Students of Color.

Without a doubt, essential resources and services for Students of Color were disappearing or holding onto very little funding. B insisted that the university loved to pretend it cares about its Student of Color, but in reality, does not back it financially. She maintained:

> It just shows you how like the university loves to front on like, oh, diversity, inclusion, send your Students of Color here because money . . . We want all these students to come into this university so [SCU] can get the federal dollars that comes with that, the tuition, scholarship money that comes with all of that but they don't want to do the actual work to make this campus actually inclusive . . . I'm in groups with the office of multicultural affairs and they talk about how they even have to fight some people to assert them existing like on campus.

B knew that SCU says it is supportive to try to ensure that the students are happy, but in reality, she has not seen any serious concrete actions being taken. B's sentiment about the university's lack of financial backing of support services for Students of Color resonated with other participants.

Antonio noticed a similar patterned. For over a couple years, he worked at the Civil Rights Library on campus, and would occasionally hear about the university supporting it, but in reality this was not the case. He recalled:

> The grant that this university just gave the Department of African American Studies to renovate the Civil Rights library wasn't much. I mean, it's there. But in reality, it didn't do much visibly. Ms. Anette, who has supervised the library for years, is constantly fighting for funding and renovations. I think for the most part this university is just paying lip service to the amount of resources that it says it provides students, especially Students of Color.

Antonio's assertion that SCU is constantly "paying lip service" for all its services it says it provides rings true for many of the participants. But as the saying goes, "Actions speak louder than words," and SCU's actions were telling students otherwise. An important element of having the right to the city or a space is the participation in decision-making over the production of such space. In his interpretation of Lefebvre's foundational right to the city work, Butler (2012) insists that inhabitants of a space must have a right to be present in all circuits of decision making, leading to the control and development of the organization of social space to challenge the domination of space exercised by both state planning bureaucracies and capital (p.145). During the time of this study, MMAX students from this project, along with other Students of Color, protested the inconsiderate investment patterns and expressed demands to invest in programs and financial support for historically marginalized Students of Color at university-held hearings. However, such concerns and demands were dismissed and instead SCU's administration established multiple

diversity committees. The dismissal of MMAX students' attempts to be part of the decision-making process at SCU further proves that they do not have the right to their university. While it can be concluded that such negligence of MMAX student input was merely an unfortunate coincidence and nothing else, CRSA allows us to interpret such negligence as a form of violence that perpetuates the subordination of MMAX students at SCU by upholding white supremacy and sustaining its racially hostile campus climate.

### Inadequate University Services

Everyone who was interviewed agreed that SCU had services for students, but a majority agreed that the services at SCU do not address their specific needs of Students of Color. It is clear that because of the racialized identities, MMAX students experience the campus differently than their white counterparts. Thus, it is only appropriate that they receive services that address their unique experiences. This was not the case. Alejandra confided that the counseling center at SCU couldn't address her specific needs as a Mexican American student:

> In general, this university does not provide services that address my needs as a Student of Color . . . Looking at the counseling center, for example, the first time I went in to see someone, because I wasn't doing so well, I sat down with a white woman . . . She just looked at me with these big eyes and . . . there was no relating . . . It was like she had never heard a life story like mine before. I was immediately turned off from seeing her again. I didn't go to the counseling center for a year, and then I had a really bad moment in my junior year and . . . I went in and I talked to this wonderful Black woman who worked at the counseling center. She didn't have to be Latinx, she just had to relate.

To Alejandra, it was not so much relating to her specific experience as a Mexican American, but it was more so finding someone who she could confide in because of her marginal status on campus. In this case, a Black woman was able to affirm her existence and experience on campus, whereas Alejandra had not felt affirmed at the counseling center.

Like Alejandra, Kona didn't have a pleasant experience her first time visiting the counseling center. She shared a traumatic experience while seeking counseling services. While she agreed that SCU has services that help students, she felt SCU was not fully equipped to help Students of Color. Kona recalled:

> I struggled a lot to get myself to go [to counseling], right, and when I finally did get the courage to go, my first experience there was with this white woman and I was trying to explain to her what I was going through and she's like, "I don't . . ." she gave me this really negative tone, she's like, "I really don't get why you're here," and I was just like, "Oh, oh, okay." . . . Eventually, I met a counselor who I did feel worked with me, but I ended up not going in general just because I felt like I never had time to go to counseling. But that was a pretty negative experience.

Even though Kona built the courage to seek help for her struggles, it was not worth it. Rather than receiving help and assurance, Kona experienced a micro-aggression since the counselor didn't see the point of her visit. Her real struggles were met with rudeness and disinterest, which discouraged

her from seeking counseling to the extent she may have needed it. Fortunately for Alejandra and Kona, they eventually found someone who could validate them, but this was not the case for others.

Although they sought out counseling, Luna never felt comfortable enough expressing how they really felt. The racial differences put them in a difficult position to talk about race and cultural related struggled. Luna reflected on their counseling experiences:

> I did utilize the counseling center, but I think my experiences in reflecting were a little bit limited, because one of my counselors was white, so I felt very uncomfortable telling her, "I'm tired of being around all these white people all the time, I'm tired of not seeing my culture around me." So, I felt like I was limited even in the ways I was kind of processing everything that was happening to me.

Although Luna struggled with racial alienation and cultural deprivation, these were not topics they felt comfortable enough sharing with their assigned counselor because she was white. Luna's prior experiences with white people at SCU have discouraged them from openly talking about race and culture even though those play a huge role in their experience as a student.

Eventually, Luna found a Counselor of Color who they were able to confide in. They explained:

> I feel like if this university was using its resources efficiently, there wouldn't be only just one Person of Color who was a counselor, and I was directed to that one, too. I used to have a white one and then they transferred me over to a Counselor of Color because they thought she could help me better. Yeah, and I think it wasn't until I had that counselor that I felt like I was really, really comfortable for once, that I told her how my teachers are being racist and stuff like that and how it would cause me a lot of anxiety in class.

After being connected with a Counselor of Color, Luna was finally able to open up about their experiences dealing with racism at SCU. Further, in their response, Luna alludes to the mere fact that there are not many Counselors of Color at SCU—something other MMAX students noticed as well.

Aurora claimed that even though the university had a few Counselors of Color, there were very few. She stated:

> This university doesn't address our needs. I don't think they provide for our specific experiences. Because if it was provided for me, it would have been a lot easier to arrive to it, and it took so, so, so much for me to even start asking because we had that already in our minds that it's going to be a bunch of white people in those offices . . . And so, that's why I'm like I don't think they're providing that for us. They're not making it easy. Provision is given. They're not giving it to us. You have to work your ass off for it. The school does not do a good job in getting Students of Color anything that we need.

Aurora admits that if SCU really cared about Students of Color, then she would not have to go out of her way to find services or people who can address her specific needs. Instead, she said that Students of Color like herself have to work really hard to find the appropriate resources for their needs.

To be sure, cultural differences between MMAX students and university personnel became a significant barrier in MMAX students seeking out help and feeling like their needs were addressed. Alma insists how even the personnel at the Financial Aid Office will not be able to understand her financial struggles:

> If I go to Financial Aid Office, you know how they have the literacy program? And I tell them about all my problems, I don't think they would be understanding where I'm coming from. My experience is a little bit different because I'm a Xicana. I don't think they would be all knowledgeable of my background.

To Alma, being poor is one thing, but being a poor first-generation Xicana is another. It's a unique experience since there are multiple systems of oppression that intersect to oppress her financially because of her identity (Crenshaw, 1991). Alma felt the Financial Aid Office would not understand why she has to use some of her financial aid money to help her family back home in Chicago. They would not understand why she couldn't use her summers for internships, but instead to help her mom sell tacos.

In theorizing the various ways cities make it difficult for marginalized people to survive, Mitchell and Heynen (2009) argue that having the right to the city or space means that the inhabitants must be guaranteed and provided "the necessary conditions for habitat and inhabiting so that freedom and the kind of socialization that makes us (individual) humans is possible" (p. 616). Because of the essential yet inadequate services provided by SCU such as culturally incompetent counseling or advising, MMAX students are denied the ability to socialize in a way that makes them as human as possible. Their racialized and gendered experiences on campus are rarely recognized and validated by those who are supposed to help them identify goals and potential solutions to problems which cause emotional turmoil. CRSA helps us explain how racism and white supremacy operate to construct space in ways that negatively impact the educational opportunities and experiences of Students of Color. Ultimately, the responses in this article provide an important glimpse of the various ways university services fail to serve its Students of Color, which result in them not being able to maximize their student experience. As such, Students of Color are denied the right to their respective university.

## Unequal Housing Accessibility

At SCU sits a neoclassical designed Greek/PanHellenic fraternity house on campus in between a state-of-the-art science building and the main library. This house, and the "disorderly" behavior enacted by its white members outside of it, is invisible to no one because of its hillside location on main campus. Throughout the year, especially before and during school athletic events, white fraternity members play music loudly while loitering in their front lawn drinking alcoholic beverages. Likewise, on the other side of the library about a minute walk from main campus lies a strip of Greek/PanHellenic sorority and fraternity houses (Greek Row), where white Greek members behave similarly not too far from campus.

While these white fraternities and sororities at this predominantly white university are in close proximity to main campus, thus they have relatively easy access to campus resources such

as the library, non-PanHellenic multicultural fraternities and sororities serving mostly Students of Color have unofficial housing about a ten to fifteen minutes away from campus. Unlike like their white Greek counterparts whose houses are just a hop, skip, and a jump from main campus, these multicultural fraternity and sorority houses are located an inconvenient fifteen-minute walk from campus and these students aren't afforded similar campus access-related opportunities as their white counterparts. The recreation facility that the university claims "is only a quick jog away" is not as close as it seems for those who, although are recognized by the university as campus organizations, are housed far from campus. In respects to juxtaposing behavior and taking into consideration white privilege, given their already marginalized and hyper-scrutinized statuses as university students, non-PanHellenic multicultural fraternity and sorority members would think twice before behaving similar to their white counterparts publicly. These concerns begin to challenge the notion of a university, at first glance, seeming to be accessible to every single enrolled student in every way, shape, or form; however, after a nuanced analysis this might not be the case at all.

The inequitable housing situation at SCU did not go unnoticed by the participants in this study. For example, Antonio described a geography class project where he mapped living arrangements based on race.

> My project was about locating racial differences in living arrangements, and the white fraternities, their proximity to campus versus the black and Latino fraternities and sororities. White fraternities, they're closer to campus. I feel like they're more officially recognized by the university. Multicultural organizations, they don't have official houses. They're off campus. So I did a map where I located each of them, and, yeah. There were some [Black and Latino Greek organizations] that didn't even have houses.

While the white fraternities and sororities were located on or near campus, the multicultural fraternities and sororities were located nowhere remotely close to campus resulting in members having to walk at least 15 to 20 minutes before arriving to campus. During the winter, the stroll to campus was prolonged due to weather conditions.

Such stark differences in living arrangements were fortified when you take into consideration differences in sizes of houses between multicultural fraternities and sororities and their white counterparts. Enrique pointed this out clearly:

> I mean materially white fraternities and sororities get the best real estate on campus. All the Frat Row Houses on Nut-tree Avenue, Frat Row Houses on Commie Ave, even just the physical space, there's the height difference. On Nut-tree Avenue, across from the library, they have a whole ass castle. There's a frat that has a whole ass castle, and they can look down at everyone who walks past. Just that physically speaking is, it's a fucking castle. Just among the student body, the white organizations are pretty much the royalty of the student body.

To Enrique, the white fraternity and sorority houses were daunting and excessively huge. The sizes of these houses, along with the university's leniency in policing their disorderly behavior in front of those houses, led to Enrique concluding that the white organizations are the "royalty" of the

SCU's student body.

Further, the differences in living arrangements between Students of Color and white students extended beyond only fraternities and sororities. Diego reflected on his observation about how Students of Color are housed far from campus:

> What's interesting to me is how sometimes, we get pushed to different places like specific apartments right on the edge of South Campus, which are predominantly Black or Students of Color. They sort of push us towards that. It sucks tho because most people take the campus bus from there, and on a bad day, it can take 30, 45 minutes to get to main campus.

Almost every single participant in this study was aware about the housing segregation at SCU. They knew that specific parts of South Campus dorms are mostly People of Color. Initially, it is easy to believe that these living arrangements are coincidental, and that SCU has no role in this matter, but when taking a closer look, one can be convinced that these arrangements are bolstered by SCU.

Several participants assured me that the university housing selection process facilitates housing segregation and alienation (Harwood et al., 2012). For instance, financial aid check reimbursements do not always clear when students need them, so by the time low-income students have the money to put down deposit, very few dorms near main campus are available. This is how low-income students—mostly Students of Color—end up at South Campus dorms, which are far away from campus. In his thoughtful analysis of how landscapes are produced to protect those who are white and wealthy, Mitchell (2017) reminds us that "behind the image and reality of any landscape is a social order—a set of social relations concretised in and given expression through the landscape" (p. 283). To Mitchell, that social order, which is defined by wealth and race, is not a coincidence; rather, it is something that is strategically produced and reproduced by people, specifically people with racial privilege and power. The aforementioned responses by participants provide a good sense of the social order in the landscape at SCU, which is produced by the university's failure to intentionally disrupt housing disparities between white students and MMAX students. CRSA foregrounds the color-line to help us understand the material impact of racism, white supremacy, and classism on the daily lives of Students of Color. Through unequal accessibility to student housing, MMAX students remain at the bottom of the social order and do not have the right to SCU.

### Unfair Treatment by Campus Police

SCU has a long-established reputation for racial preferential treatment on behalf of the Department of Student Safety (DSS). This preferential treatment is notable in how student behavior is policed at house parties or bars near campus. Recently, SCU was nationally recognized as a party school, and it was evident to several participants that this designation was specifically for white students. They are the royalty on campus, so they are treated as if they can do whatever they want, wherever they want. Yet, Students of Color are not allowed to behave disorderly in public. It became obvious that DSS was not as lenient with Students of Color as they were with white students. Antonio DJ'd

at house parties, and he made an important observation that elaborated on his geography class project:

> The white parties, just how much they get away with things, just like loud music . . . even with Latinx parties, they shut those down, and then other white frats, they don't. What I found as a part of my project is that white students have cops that patrol their parties. Not patrol their parties, they like protect their parties and . . . The university officially sanctions those parties, whereas Black and Latino fraternities and sororities, they don't get the same privileges.

To Antonio, DSS truly cares about the safety of white students and do whatever it takes to ensure that they can have a fun time safely, even if it means sanctioning their disorderly behavior. Such an observation about sanctioning parties does not come as a surprise when you consider that each year SCU hosts a music festival where students (legal age) are given free alcohol.

Aurora also noticed a difference in racial preferential treatment at parties:

> I stopped going to parties like that my sophomore year, because every time we would go out, we would show up, and then that shit would get shut down in 30 minutes. But the white people are partying on campus, all day, while people are walking to class. Shirtless, playing beer pong outside of their houses on campus, and they're not getting called on. Police aren't coming up and shutting their shit down.

Aurora's frustration in witnessing parties hosted by Students of Color get shut down so quickly resulted in her no longer going to parties. Unlike their white counterparts, Aurora and her friends were unable to socialize, dance, and meet new people at these social gatherings. Further, Aurora pointed out the hypocrisy that is difficult to ignore, which is that white students are allowed to party recklessly in broad daylight on campus, yet their parties are rarely shut down by DSS.

White students' protection of belligerent behavior was also observed by Martita. She recalled her experiences on weekends passing by M Street, a commercial area filled with bars and restaurants across the street from SCU:

> Campus police literally protect white students. *Cada* certain days of the week *se paran en la orilla de* M street, where like they actually block it off, and I believe that they block it off, *la entrada*, to protect drunk white kids who are walking on that street. They know damn fucking well that there's a lot of underage students drinking illegally. Most of those kids going into those bars aren't supposed to be drinking. *Y nomas esta la policia alli, parada, y no les dice nada.*

Again, DSS methodically protects the safety of white students even though some may be drinking illegally. In his work on the geographies of policing and race, Jefferson (2018) argues that unjust racialized policing tactics are further perpetuated through predictive crime mapping and the mental maps that officers construct to rationalize differential territorial practices. At SCU, DSS knows the party history of M street, along with its predictability of white crime, and uses racialized policing tactics to ensure the safety of white students. Specifically, DSS goes out of their way, such as barricading a busy street intersection, to ensure that drunken white students are not hit by cars.

These privileges of being protected as a SCU student may not be extended to MMAX students because they may be questioned as to whether they even attend the university (Smith et al., 2007). Such sentiment was expressed by Diego.

> I don't feel like I have the same privileges around campus police. Even just the white kids who carry beers when they walk around on campus during game days. It's like, "Fuck that, I couldn't do that."

As a Student of Color at SCU, Diego does not feel confident that he could behave disorderly in public and get away with it in ways he has seen white students do so. Undeniably, it appears as if Diego, with others in this study, have to navigate "two separate worlds": one for the white majority and another for Students of Color (Zanolini Morrison, 2010). CRSA urges us to challenge race-neutral practices in all educational spaces, as well as policing practices that uphold white supremacy and racism. The subordinated status of Students of Color is perpetuated by SCU's campus police racialized policing practices that protect white students while scrutinize Students of Color. The policing of behavior, whether disorderly or not, is often used as justification to deny marginalized people the right to the city or a space (Mitchell, 2003). In this instance, having the right to SCU means that MMAX students' behavior is not defined as "disorderly," and thereafter policed as such, simply because they are Students of Color.

## Discussion

The primary purpose of this article was to illustrate the various ways MMAX students are denied access to their university, ultimately resulting in them being denied the right to their respective university. A combination of intentionally neglectful university investment patterns, inadequate university services, unequal housing accessibility, and unfair treatment by campus police underscore the mere fact that SCU's campus environment has created hindrances for particular students; specifically, MMAX students as evidenced in this article. Further, although this particular predominantly white university recruits, admits, and matriculates students from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds, it is obvious that they do not afford them the same experiences and rights to the university as they do to their white counterparts. The way we conceptualize experiences and accessibility for all students at this predominantly white university could be informed tremendously by conversations revolving around these disparities in experiences. There is an additional toll placed on Students of Color in that they are readily exposed to predicaments not experienced by their white counterparts (Yosso et al., 2009; Zanolini Morrison, 2010).

As a dynamic framework in education, CRSA challenges us to view spaces in higher education as complicit in the marginalization of Students of Color rather than as neutral or innocent. In the words of Soja (2010, p. 103, as cited in Vélez et al., 2021), ". . . space is filled with politics and privileges, ideologies and cultural collisions, utopian ideals and dystopian oppression, justice and injustice, oppressive power and the possibility for emancipation." As evidenced in the responses in this article, at SCU, space is absolutely filled with politics and privileges, ultimately prioritizing white students, while MMAX students are left to fend for themselves and navigate a racially hostile campus environment. Thus, the findings in this article

add to the ongoing conversation of how racialized struggles over issues of space impact non-Black People of Color, ultimately urging us to challenge the presumed Black-white racial binary (Guerrero, 2017). Since universities were established for whites and have remained exclusively accessible to them (Wilder, 2014), their interests and needs have remained at the forefront in determining who and how a university will serve its student body. Consequently, a predominantly white university campus becomes a hostile and culturally depriving environment for Students of Color (González, 2002). MMAX students at SCU do not have their basic needs met and they feel as if they are constantly neglected by their university's administration. While they are official matriculated students, their voices and concerns are not taken seriously, and they do not have the same access to their university as their white counterparts.

An important recommendation put forth in this article considers mental health. Although white students do not experience a racially hostile campus environment because of their whiteness, MMAX students, along with other Students of Color, are readily exposed to racially hostile predicaments (Gusa, 2010; Yosso et al., 2009; Zanolini Morrison, 2010). Therefore, the counseling needs of MMAX students differ significantly from those of white students. So, it's very important that MMAX students have access to counselors who have training in anti-racist practices. More times than not, clinicians, therapists, and counselors fail to understand how issues of race influence the therapy process and how racism potentially impacts the delivery of services to Clients of Color (Sue et al., 2007). My research shows that this is how the MMAX students experienced counseling services at SCU. So, trained counselors who can address issues of racism and other systems of oppression is an important recommendation. University services must pay special attention to and address the cultural experiences and needs of students from diverse backgrounds.

In his infamous, often-misinterpreted piece, "Does The Negro Need Separate Schools?," Du Bois (1935) poignantly states that "at Harvard, Yale and Columbia, Negroes are admitted but not welcomed" (p. 329). Unfortunately, in our contemporary educational state—a little over eighty years later—this is still the case. Students of Color and other students with marginalized identities are admitted to both prestigious and non-prestigious predominantly white universities but are not afforded the same rights to and experiences at their respective university as their white counterparts. All of this is in spite of the gradual increase of Students of Color in higher education. And yet this will remain the same if Students of Color are not given an opportunity to dismantle the social order and physical infrastructure of the universities at which they attend.

Fortunately, even if not given structural support, Students of Color find ways to cope and manage a hostile campus environment (Degaldo Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Yosso & Lopez, 2010). For example, Solórzano et al. (2000) found that Students of Color created academic and social "counter-spaces," which they define as "sites where deficit notions of People of Color can be challenged and where a positive collegiate racial climate can be established and maintained" (p. 70) as a response to racial microaggressions and racism on and off campus. Still, in the absence of structural support, the onus is on them—something that is problematic and warrants reconsideration.

Historically, and even more recently, there have been an increasing number of demands

put forth by Students of Color such as establishing cultural centers (Lumpkin, 2021), abolishing campus police (Rich, 2021), hiring diverse faculty (Perez Lopez, 2021), removing statues of problematic historical figures (Anderson, 2020), and so on to create an inclusive university campus environment. Fulfilling these demands will allow for Students of Color to not only co-construct their universities tailored toward their needs and interests, but also play a central role in the re-making of the university. In this process, space is gained and there is an inevitable increase in representation. But, to work toward establishing a culturally inclusive and enhancing campus climate environment (Garcia, 2019), Students of Color must have the right to their university.

**Notes**

[1] People of Color, Students of Color, and Faculty of Color refer those in often marginalized racial identity groups (e.g., African Americans, Latinxs, Chicanxs, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans).

[2] Much of the Hispanic or Latinx educational success has been talked about without fully taking into consideration the significant increase of the Latinx population. Thus, these analyses flaunting the increase in Latinx students, along with other Students of Color, in the realm of post-secondary education (i.e., higher education) minimize major disparities in educational resources, access, and opportunities between Latinxs and their White counterparts (Pérez Huber et al., 2014).

[3] Data gathered from the following website: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cha.asp

[4] Throughout this manuscript, I use Students of Color interchangeably with Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) students because MMAX students fall under the broader category of Students of Color, and the participants in this study also referred to themselves as Students of Color. While this study focuses exclusively on the experiences of MMAX students, other Students of Color—specifically Black and non-MMAX Latinx students—expressed to me similar concerns throughout the data collection process, but I did not collect those responses for this project.

[5] While Latinx encompasses a wide variety of people from Latin America and the Caribbean, including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Guatemalans, Colombians, Chileans, and so on, I decided to specifically use Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx (MMAX) because the participants specifically identified as MMAX, and Latinx is too broad and doesn't consider the unique ethnic-based experiences of being MMAX.

[6] All names in this manuscript are pseudonyms, which participants selected themselves.

[7] Pseudonym for name of organization.

**REFERENCES**

Alcoff, L. (1991). The problem of speaking for others. *Cultural Critique*, *20*, 5–32.

Anderson, E. (2015). The white space. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, *1*(1), 10–21.

Anderson, G. (2020, July 6). *Campuses reckon with racist past*. Inside Higher Ed. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/07/06/campuses-remove-monuments-and-building-names-legacies-racism

Andrade, L. M. (2018). Latina/o transfer students' selective integration and spatial awareness of university spaces. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *17*(4), 347–374.

Bhattacharya, H. (2008). New critical collaborative ethnography. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods* (pp. 303–322). The Guilford Press.

Butler, C. (2012). *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial politics, everyday life and the right to the city*. Routledge-Cavendish.

Cabrera, N. L. (2014). Exposing Whiteness in higher education: White male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating White supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *17*(1), 30–55.

Calmore, J. O. (1995). Racialized space and the culture of segregation: Hewing a stone of hope from a mountain of despair. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, *143*(5), 1233–1273.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Identity politics, intersectionality, and violence against women. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299.

Delaney, D. (2002). The space that race makes. *The professional geographer*, *54*(1), 6-14.

Delgado Bernal, D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *68*(4), 555–583.

Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *14*(5), 623–639.

Du Bois, W.E.B. (1935). Does the Negro need separate schools?. *Journal of Negro Education*, *4*(3), 328–335.

Dyer, R. (1988) White. *Screen*, *29*(4), 44-65.

Fierros, C., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2016). Vamos a pláticar: The contours of pláticas as methodology. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, *15*(2), 98–121.

Garcia, G. A. (2019). *Becoming Hispanic-serving institutions: Opportunities for colleges and universities.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Gladwell, M. (2016, July). *Food fight*. Pushkin. http://revisionisthistory.com/episodes/05-food-fight

Goheen, P. G. (1994). Negotiating access to public space in mid-nineteenth century Toronto. *Journal of Historical Geography*, *20*(4), 430–449.

González, K. P. (2002). Campus culture and the experiences of Chicano students in a predominantly White university. *Urban Education*, *37*(2), 193–218.

Guerrero, P. M. (2017). *Nuevo South: Latinas/os, Asians, and the remaking of place*. University of Texas Press.

Gusa, D. L. (2010). White institutional presence: The impact of Whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review*, *80*(4), 464–490.

Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard Law Review*, *106*(8), 1707–1791.

Harvey, D. (2003). The right to the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *27*(4), 939–994.

Harwood, S. A., Huntt, M. B., Mendenhall, R., & Lewis, J. A. (2012). Racial microaggressions in the residence halls: Experiences of students of color at a predominantly White university. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *5*(3), 159–173.

Inwood, J. F., & Martin, D. G. (2008). Whitewash: White privilege and racialized landscapes at the University of Georgia. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *9*(4), 373–395.

Jefferson, B. J. (2018). Predictable policing: Predictive crime mapping and geographies of policing and race. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, *108*(1), 1–16.

Ledesma, M. C., & Calderón, D. (2015). Critical race theory in education: A review of past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*(3), 206–222.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). Les illusions de la modernite. In I. Ramoney, J. Decornoy, & C. Brie (Eds.), *La ville partout et partout en crise, Manière de voir*. Le Monde diplomatique.

Lefebvre, H. (1967/1996). The right to the city. In E. Kofman & E. Lebas (Eds.), *Writings on cities* (pp. 63–184). Blackwell.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 163–188). Sage Publications.

Lipsitz, G. (1995). The possessive investment in whiteness: Racialized social democracy and the "white" problem in American studies. *American Quarterly*, *47*(3), 369–387.

Lipsitz, G. (2007). The racialization of space and the spatialization of race: Theorizing the hidden architecture of landscape. *Landscape Journal*, *26*(1), 10–23.

Lipsitz, G. (2011). *How racism takes place*. Temple University Press.

Lumpkin, L. (2021, November 11). *University of Maryland to create 5 new cultural centers for underrepresented students*. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/11/11/university-maryland-cultural-centers/

Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Sage Publications.

Marcuse, P. (2009). From critical urban theory to the right to the city. *City*, *13*(2-3), 185–197.

Minikel-Lacocque, J. (2013). Racism, college, and the power of words: Racial microaggressions reconsidered. *American Educational Research Journal*, *50*(3), 432–465.

Mitchell, D. (1997). The annihilation of space by law: The roots and implications of anti-homeless laws in the United States. *Antipode*, *29*(3), 303–335.

Mitchell, D. (2000). *Cultural geography: A critical introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Mitchell, D. (2003). *The right to the city: Social justice and the fight for public space*. The Guilford Press.

Mitchell, D. (2017). A relational approach to landscape and urbanism: The view from an exclusive suburb. *Landscape Research*, *42*(3), 277–290.

Mitchell, D., & Heynen, N. (2009). The geography of survival and the right to the city: Speculations on surveillance, legal innovation, and the criminalization of intervention. *Urban Geography*, *30*(6), 611–632.

Mitchell, D. & Staeheli, l. (2009). Public space. In N. Thrift & R. Kitchen (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of human geography* (pp. 511–516). Elsevier.

Monreal, T. (2021). "Here being in school is worse": How Latinx teachers navigate, recreate, and instigate hostile spaces in the US South. *Educational Studies*, 1–24.

Muñoz, F. M. (2009). Critical race theory and the landscapes of higher education. *The Vermont Connection*, *30*(1), 6.

Pérez, A. H. (2020). "Colorblind-spots" in campus design: Planners and architects can offer solutions that center on social justice. *Planning for Higher Education*, *49*(1), 21–26.

Pérez Huber, L., Vélez, V. N., & Solórzano, D. G. (2014). *The growing educational equity gap for California's Latina/o students*. Latino Policy & Issues Brief. Number 29. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.

Perez Lopez, F. (2021, March 16). Students demand CSUN to diversify faculty population. *Daily Sundial*. https://sundial.csun.edu/163741/news/students-demand-csun-to-diversify-faculty-population/

Pierce, C. (1970). Offensive mechanisms. In F. B. Barbour (Ed.), *The Black seventies* (pp. 265–282). Porter Sargent Publisher.

Pulido, L. (2000). Rethinking environmental racism: White privilege and urban development in Southern California. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, *90*(1), 12–40.

Rich, E. (2021, September 6). The movement to de-cop the campus. *In These Times.* https://inthesetimes.com/article/cops-off-campus-uc-police-abolition

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Smith, W. A. (2004). Black faculty coping with racial battle fatigue: The campus racial climate in a post-Civil Rights Era. In D. Cleveland (Ed.), *A long way to go: Conversations about race by African American faculty and graduate students* (pp. 171–190).

Smith, W. A., Allen, W. R., & Danley, L. L. (2007). "Assume the position . . . you fit the description": Psychosocial experiences and racial battle fatigue among African American male college students. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *51*(4), 551–578.

Soja, E. W. (1989). *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. Verso.

Solórzano, D. G., Allen, W. R., & Carroll, G. (2002). Keeping race in place: Racial microaggressions and campus racial climate at the University of California, Berkeley. *Chicano-Latino Law Review*, *23*, 15–112.

Solórzano, D. G., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, *69*(1/2), 60–73.

Solórzano, D. G., & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical race theory, marginality, and the experience of students of color in higher education. In C. A. Torres & T. R. Mitchell (Eds.), *Sociology of education: Emerging perspectives* (pp. 211–224). SUNY Press.

Solórzano, D. G., Villalpando, O., & Oseguera, L. (2005). Educational inequities and Latina/o undergraduate students in the United States. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *4*(3), 272–294.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, *62*(4), 271–286.

Vélez, V., & Solórzano, D. G. (2017). Critical race spatial analysis: Conceptualizing GIS as a tool for critical race research in education. In D. Morrison, S. A. Annamma, & D. D. Jackson (Eds.), *Critical race spatial analysis: Mapping to understand and address educational inequity* (pp. 8–31). Stylus.

Vélez, V. N., Torres, D. P., & Jaramillo, D. L. (2021). Trenzudas, truchas, and traviesas: Mapping higher education through a Chicana feminist cartography. In N. M. Garcia, C. Salinas Jr., & J. Cisneros (Eds.), *Studying Latinx/a/o students in higher education* (pp. 106-120). Routledge.

Wilder, C. S. (2014). *Ebony and ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Yosso, T. J., & Lopez, C. B. (2010). Counterspaces in a hostile place: A critical race theory analysis of campus culture centers. In L. Patton (Ed.), *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice* (pp. 83–104). Stylus.

Yosso, T. J., Smith, W. A., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. G. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(4), 659–691.

Zanolini Morrison, G. (2010). Two separate worlds: Students of color at a predominantly White university. *Journal of Black Studies, 40*(5), 987–1015.

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# UNDOCUMENTED CHICANX/LATINX GRADUATE STUDENTS: ILLUMINATING HOME-BASED SOURCES OF SUPPORT

**Argelia Lara and Pedro E Nava**
*Santa Clara University*

**AUTHOR NOTE**
Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Argelia Lara, School of Education & Counseling Psychology, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA 95050. E-mail: alara@scu.edu.

**ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research study explores the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx undocumented graduate students in higher education and specifically examines the home-based teachings and learnings employed by their parents to access and navigate higher education institutions. The study is guided by the research question: How do undocumented Latinx graduate students make sense of the forms of support and participation they receive from their families around education? The authors used Bernal's (2001) Pedagogies of the Home as a guiding framework. The findings revealed important learnings from their family's migration, *laboral* experiences and struggles, and strategies to resist marginalization. Through this study, student experiences highlight important considerations for policy and practice that validate the teachings and learnings that occur in their families and homes.

***Keywords***: undocumented graduate students, pedagogies of the home, family engagement, Chicanx/Latinx students

## "Now it's my turn": Education in Action

Each year during graduation season at Mills College,[1] members of the graduating class have the opportunity to inscribe messages on the Senior Paint Wall at the center of campus. This "mural" painted on the Senior Paint Wall is a collective effort of the rich and complex diversity present on this unique campus. These messages often serve as a self-tribute or expressions of deep gratitude and appreciation to family or close friends who have supported the graduating students to "make

it." Some students write inside jokes or well wishes for themselves or others. In contrast, other students leave messages of the struggles they overcame, sacrifices made, and dreams that graduation from Mills College brings closer to fulfillment. The following message was written by a graduating undergraduate student centering on aspects of their identity, connecting to familial generations of struggle, and affirming a commitment to work to end injustice:

> *Yo soy primera generación, queer, indígena, Chicanx mujer quien viene de una casa pobre y madre soltera. Mi gente sufrió para asegurar que yo podría salir adelante. Ahora es mi turno de asegurar que mi gente ya no sufra.*
>
> I am first generation, queer, indigenous, Chicanx woman who comes from a poor single mother household. My people have suffered to assure that I would prosper. Now it's my turn to make sure my people no longer suffer.

The message—written by a multiply marginalized (Annamma & Handy, 2019) first-generation, queer, *Indígena*, low-income, Chicanx *mujer*—draws attention to the resistance people from her community have endured so students like her can "*salir adelante*," or get ahead. In that same vein, given the history of Mills College, which is now a Hispanic Serving Institution,[2] we can infer that this student also experienced marginalization on the pathway toward completing their undergraduate studies. The path toward undergraduate degree completion, along with the familial legacy spanning borders, is fraught with reminders of one's otherness (Conchas & Acevedo, 2020; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). This shows that even higher education institutions with progressive track records still struggle to be responsive to non-white students that are often othered and marginalized. The student's written affirmation serves as an expression of solidarity with those "othered," as she declares it her "turn" to utilize her formal education to ensure that her people "no longer suffer" by working to stop social injustice.

Across the country, institutions of higher education are facing increasing scrutiny to address hostile campus racial climate issues by creating more inclusive campus environments (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). In racially diverse states like California, where three-quarters of the graduating K-12 students are of color, and the state's legislature has high percentages of lawmakers of color, the policy context for Latinx students has seen a shift through an array of legislative changes with a greater focus on educational equity (Ed Data, 2021). Over the last 20 years, California policymakers have passed AB 540,[3] the California Dream Act, Proposition 58, and, most recently, an ethnic studies high school graduation requirement. These policy changes are indicative of the growing Latinx political representation in the nation's most racially diverse state.

The experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students across the higher education pipeline reveal that in California, almost 40% are pushed out before graduating high school, and only 11 out of every 100 students who start elementary school eventually complete a 4-year degree (Covarrubias et al., 2018). Other educational pipeline research has highlighted within-group differences across Latinx communities that call attention to other stark inequities. For example, Covarrubias and Lara (2014) found citizenship status plays a significant part in the educational attainment of the Chicanx population. U.S.-born Chicanx were found to show significantly higher high school, college, and graduate school attainment and enrollment rates than foreign-born and noncitizen Chicanx. Their

work revealed that citizenship status is an important privilege that provided tangible material benefits to help access higher education. Other scholarship focusing on how Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals[4] (DACA) affects the lives of people who are undocumented has similarly shown that DACA recipients have more straightforward transitions into adulthood (Gonzales, Ellis, Rendon-Garcia, & Brant, 2018) compared to their undocumented non-DACA peers.

Despite the challenges faced by undocumented Chicanx and Latinx students across the higher education pipeline, some manage to complete their undergraduate education. Examining their K-12 and postsecondary experiences reveals the critical role of their families in supporting and nurturing their educational and occupational endeavors. A growing body of literature has found that Chicanx and Latinx families play an important, yet under-acknowledged role in educational engagement that includes: home-based communicative practices (Auerbach, 2006; Gaitan, 1994; Valdés, 1996); developing an educational presence (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005); providing myriad forms of support (Nava, 2012); and organizing for political power (Manzo, 2016; Manzo & Deeb-Sossa, 2018; Paredes Scribner & Fernandez, 2017; Vélez, 2016). While most of this research is focused on the K-12 experiences of Chicanx/Latinx families, outside of a few studies focusing on college-going (Alvarez, 2010, 2015), additional research is urgently needed to more closely examine how Latinx families support their undocumented adult children in higher education.

In the opening vignette, the student alludes to the role of her single mother in her higher education experience. Our aim is to illustrate the role of familial home-based pedagogies (Bernal, 2001) in influencing the career and professional aspirations of Latinx undocumented graduate students. Prior research has shown a multitude of ways that families engage and participate in their children's education, in both formal and informal ways. In this paper, we expand on existing research and emphasize how immigrant parents contribute important knowledge and resources rooted in their home-based experiences (Bernal, 2001) to promote the educational success of their undocumented adult children. Therefore, this paper is guided by the research question: How do Latinx undocumented graduate students make sense of their familial histories and the forms of support they receive from their families toward education? The study draws on two years of ethnographic and oral history data through a counterstorytelling method to examine the life journeys and educational experiences of Chicanx/Latinx undocumented graduate students enrolled across both of the 4-year degree-granting public systems of higher education in California: the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC) systems.

## Literature Review

### Navigating the Legal Context in Higher Education for Undocumented Students

Historically, undocumented students have struggled against discriminatory federal and state policies that impeded their education (Oliverez, 2006; Perez Huber & Malagon, 2007; Santos, 2006). Since 1974, several critical court cases have provided undocumented students with the opportunity to obtain an education. The Uniform Residency Law, a California law that lasted from 1974 to 1980, allowed long-term California residents to pay in-state tuition at all public colleges

and universities (Madera, 2008). Once the law expired, however, undocumented students had to pay out-of-state tuition from 1980 to 1986. One of the most important cases to address the educational rights of undocumented students was *Plyler v. Doe* (457 U.S. 202, 1982), which held that 19 undocumented students had protection under the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and states could not deny them the opportunity to obtain an education. The case was key in pushing the right of undocumented students to receive an elementary and high school education. However, the *Plyler* decision did not include opportunities for undocumented students to attend institutions of higher education.

In 1985, the case of *Leticia A. v. UC Regents and CSU Board of Trustees* supported the rights of undocumented college students to pay in-state tuition. In this case, the court ruled that the university should treat undocumented students as California residents and that students meeting the residency requirements of one year and one day qualified to pay in-state tuition and were eligible for state financial aid, such as Cal Grants (Madera, 2008). In 1990, though, the case of *Bradford v. UC Regents* overturned the previous ruling, and undocumented students were again charged out-of-state tuition and lost all eligibility to receive financial aid (Madera, 2008).

In 2001, Assemblyman Marco Antonio Firebaugh helped pass the California Legislature Assembly Bill 540 (AB540) which granted undocumented students the opportunity to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities. For eligibility purposes, AB540 required students to be graduates of a California high school, to have attended a California high school for at least three years, and to secure current enrollment in a California Community College, California State University, or a University of California (Santos, 2006). While AB540 was beneficial for undocumented students, the cost of tuition and room and board impeded many students from attending state universities and led many of those that did enroll to leave the university (Santos, 2006). In 2005, the court case *Martinez v. Regents of the University of California* challenged AB540. A group of forty-two U.S. citizen students, all of whom had been declared ineligible for AB540, filed a class-action lawsuit against the University of California, California State University, and the Community College systems. The plaintiffs argued that AB540 violated federal law because it could not provide undocumented students with tuition and residency benefits unless a citizen or national of the United States were also eligible for such benefits. In November 2010 the California Supreme Court issued a ruling on the *Martinez v. Regents of the University of California* rejecting the challenge to AB540, allowing in-state tuition benefits to continue for undocumented students.

Recent scholarship on undocumented students both inside and outside of educational contexts has become increasingly critical of the against-all-odds success stories of "DREAMers" (Abrego & Negrón-Gonzales, 2020). The term DREAMer highlights and positions the undocumented who attain success through higher education as more deserving of inclusion and legalization, in essence being model minorities (Abrego & Negrón-Gonzales, 2020; Buenavista, 2018). Abrego and Negrón-Gonzales (2020) contest the DREAMer narrative that some are more deserving than others, wrestle with the implications of such framing, and instead call for broader human rights framing that suggests all humans are deserving. Their argument challenges the

framing of "deservingness" as a meritocratic ideal because it is fundamentally flawed and based on the extent to which one's worthiness is determined by one's use of capitalist notions of productivity. We concur with Negrón-Gonzales, Abrego, and Coll (2015) and believe that "humane immigration policies should recognize all subjects as equally deserving of the right to work, shelter, education, family integrity, and to live without fear of violence" (p. 10).

**Latinx Undocumented Students Across the Higher Education Pipeline**

Over the last decade, research on Latinx undocumented students has increasingly explored numerous factors impacting their higher education trajectories, including financial challenges (Abrego, 2006; Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011); state and federal policy constraints (Abrego & Gonzalez, 2010; Enriquez, Hernandez, Millán, & Vera, 2019; Negrón-Gonzalez, 2017); social and academic stressors (Suárez-Orozco & Lopez Hernández, 2020; Perez, Cortez, Ramos, & Coronado 2010); racism and micro-aggressions (Muñoz & Vigil 2018; Perez Huber, 2009); and decision-making processes of college graduates (Lara & Nava, 2018), among other factors. Other research has increasingly focused on physical and mental harm (Gonzales, 2015; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013) that undocumented students experience from dehumanizing immigration policies. Future research is needed to illuminate the experiences of undocumented students after undergraduate degree completion and their experiences in graduate school. In this article, we seek to contribute to the small but growing literature pertaining to familial supports in higher education for Chicanx/Latinx undocumented students. In particular, we hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the pedagogies learned in the home of Chicanx/Latinx undocumented graduate students around education.

**The Role of Latinx Family Support of Undocumented Students**

Important research has documented a link between family engagement in education and the educational outcomes for all groups (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), but less is known about the roles that Latinx immigrant parents play in supporting their children, and even less so for those that are undocumented. Guided by normative approaches based on White middle-class values towards family engagement (Auerbach, 2002; Ishimaru 2019), educators in school spaces often overlook the particular ways that Latinx families provide critical support. More specifically, some research has shown how working-class immigrant parents may have a presence (Carreón et al., 2005) in their children's schooling without being physically present. Scholars in the field of education (Ceja, 2004; Manzo, 2016) have argued that some forms of involvement and encouragement that Chicanx parents provide are different and may be manifested through culturally specific forms such as *consejos* [folk wisdom], family stories (Nava, 2017), *apoyo* as broad-based support (Nava, 2012), or through lessons learned from viewing their parents and the importance and value placed on sacrifices (Rocha, 2020) and working hard (Lopez, 2001). In these ways, parental encouragement (Auerbach, 2006) plays a vital role in mediating the harmful risk factor effects that many of their children face. Ceja (2004) has written about the significance of older siblings in Chicanx families (or community members) who have gone to college and can

serve as protective agents and as a "mobility related resource" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997) by sharing important information, knowledge, and opportunities for their younger siblings.

## Theoretical Frameworks

This study is guided by a theoretical framework that draws on the work of Chicana feminists (Bernal, 1998, 2001) and critical race scholars to help explain Chicanx and Latinx familial practices of educational support. We turn to Chicana Feminist theoretical perspectives that consider families of color as holders and creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 1998, 2001, 2002). In her ethnographic work with Chicana college students, Bernal (2001) developed a framework to account for the home-based pedagogies to resist different systems of oppression. Grounded in Chicana Feminism (Bernal, 2001), these pedagogies of teaching and learning in the home "allow Chicanas to draw upon their own cultures and sense of self to resist domination along the axes of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation" (p. 624). We draw on Bernal's pedagogies of the home framework to illustrate how students and their families engage in transformative resistance (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). The components of the framework consist of collective experiences and community memory, teachings and learnings of everyday life, and resistance strategies.

The first component we engage in the pedagogies of the home framework, collective experiences and community memory, situates Chicanx/Latinx experiences within the context of the family unit. As such, this creates a rich context for community and family knowledge to be transmitted intergenerationally through a variety of oral traditions, including "legends, *corridos*, storytelling, and behavior" (p. 624). A second component of the framework consists of teachings and learnings of everyday life, which are "key for the emotional and physical survival of Chicana students, yet it is seldom acknowledged in educational research and practice" (Bernal, 2001, p. 625). For Chicanas, whether attending institutions of higher education or in their places of employment, their experiences often include being subjected to racism or other dehumanizing experiences. The third component of the framework consists of subtle resistance strategies. In other work, Solorzano and Bernal (2001) use a framework of transformative resistance to highlight the ways that Chicanx students strategically navigate across the educational system. Some forms of transformative resistance are internal and may go unnoticed because an individual's behavior may be subtle or silent.

## Methods and Data Collection

A Critical Race Methodology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) informed the study's design, which included qualitative data collection methods and focused on experiential and familial knowledge collected through the student counterstories. This method specifically honed in on the home-based parental teachings these students learned throughout their educational journeys. We utilized counter storytelling methods, which aided the participants in retrospectively thinking about teachings and learnings they experienced at home and were key in supporting their educational trajectories. We collected life history interviews focused on their migratory and labor histories,

and in-depth semi-structured interviews focused on educational aspirations and navigational strategies. This article draws from data collected out of a larger study focusing on the decision-making processes and navigational strategies of Latinx undocumented college graduates in the state of California (Lara, 2014; Lara & Nava, 2018).

The participants in the study were Chicanx/Latinx graduate students enrolled in a California State University or a University of California campus. To facilitate the recruitment process in both institutions, student support services and programs serving migrant and undocumented students were strategically targeted. Student participants were recruited by email, as program directors reached out to students asking for volunteer participants (Babbie, 1998). A total of 20 graduate student participants were in the study; 10 were women, 10 were men, and they were enrolled in diverse fields, spanning STEM fields (7), education (4), humanities (4), the social sciences (3), and law (2). The majority of the research participants were of Mexican origin (18), except for one student born in Peru and another in Brazil. The initial research participants played a critical role in recruitment efforts by making recommendations to friends in similar networks and who shared similar lived experiences, given they maintained a low profile (Babbie, 1998). During data collection, we sought to learn about the participants and their families and their educational, laboral, and migratory histories. We also asked questions about parental hopes and expectations and parental roles played in education, students' formative experiences in school and at home, and obstacles experienced as college students, among other questions. The goal of the data collection was to gain a deeper understanding of students lived experiences and critical learning moments connected to their education.

## Data Analysis

Furthermore, as we listened to interviews prior to transcription, we wrote analytic memos and developed tentative ideas about categories and relationships (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). According to Maxwell (1996), the goal of coding is to "'fracture' the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts" (p. 79). The authors read each transcription, highlighted and identified important codes, and organized them into different categories. Contextualizing strategies were also used to "understand the data in context" facilitating the identification of "relationship(s) among different elements of the text" (p. 79). These strategies were particularly helpful in analyzing the life history narratives of participants told through the oral history interviews. These narratives provided important analytical insight to understand key life moments around teachings and learnings that were taking place in their "home life," which invoked Bernal's pedagogies of the home framework. The analytical process required indexing and charting data, highlighting and sorting quotes, and making comparisons both within and between cases (Rabiee, 2004). Together, collective experiences and community memory, teachings and learnings of everyday life, and subtle resistance strategies provide the basis for categories to analyze the data and frame the findings.

## Findings

The student narratives revealed important learnings from their family's migration, laboral experiences and struggles, and how they resist marginalization. The teaching and learning in the home played an important role in motivating them towards seeking to fulfill their academic goals. The first set of findings we refer to as *Stories of Migration and Opportunity*. These consisted of learnings based on the collective experiences of migration and a communal memory held within the family, which unlike the limited parental opportunities for education from a generation prior, revealed a greater degree of possibility for the children. The second set of findings we refer to as *Lessons of Struggle and Survival* in the United States consist of the teachings and learnings of everyday life. These learnings were indicative of the family's acclimation to a new life in a new country, exemplified by experiences of subjugation as undocumented working-class immigrants. Lastly, *Subtle Resistance Strategies* can be understood as actions of parental support positioning their children strategically by prioritizing their goals despite not having knowledge of the inner workings of the U.S. educational system.

### Stories of Migration & Opportunity

The undocumented Latinx student participants in this study recounted collective experiences and communal memories of their family's migration to the United States. Their communal memories of migration provided a historical context to understand the corresponding actions that led them and their families to leave their home countries. Across the student participants, a common theme present in their interviews was a sense of hope and possibility from a new beginning in a place understood to represent greater mobility and opportunity. Comparatively speaking, the research participants taking part in this study viewed the opportunity to access higher education as an important step towards avoiding and possibly transforming, the hardships they and their parents experienced.

A common reason research participants indicated their parents migrated to the United States was due to the hardships associated with a prolonged economic downturn and no longer being able to provide for their families. Familial migration toward the United States was seen as a logical response toward finding stable and better-paying employment. While migration to the U.S occurred at distinct ages ranging from 6 months to 16 years of age, those who were under the age of 5 years had less vivid memories of their connection to their country of origin, and most of what they recalled was learned through communal memory informed by familial stories. Those older at the time of U.S. migration had more clear and vivid memories of their family's collective experiences of migration and what was left behind in the country of birth.

An example of this was Lorena, a graduate student enrolled in a teacher preparation program. Lorena migrated with her family to the United States at the age of two due to her family's economic hardship. Lorena's father had previously come to the United States in 1970 and did not like the pace of life, so he returned to Mexico and swore never to return. An economic downturn decades later coupled with a growing family, and the low pay he received working as a miner in the Mexican state of Jalisco forced him to reluctantly migrate once again to the U.S, with his family

following him one month later. Like other immigrants, Lorena recounted, "he heard all these great stories and he wanted something better for us too." This story of their family facing economic hardship, which served as a form of communal memory, was shared by Lorena's mother with all of her children. Lorena remembered crossing the border dressed up as a little boy; she now understands that she was "passing" the border impersonating a documented male cousin of a similar age. These stories of migration also highlighted an important element of parental socioeconomic status. In addition to economic hardships, parents' low educational attainment often served as an example for their children of the limitations that educational access has on parental employment opportunities and how limited access to education resulted in economic hardships. These experiences intensified the drive and interest of research participants to take advantage of the educational possibilities available to them. For several of the students, a collective experience based on a familial history of educational exclusion informed their aspirations to attain a higher education. Lorena, whose childhood dream had been to become a teacher, elaborated upon the influence her mother's limited access to education had on her desire to continue her educational journey:

> I see my mother, she's so smart and it's just so frustrating that because of her situation she was so poor and she couldn't go to school. Just the other day I was talking to her. I was like, "Mom, what would you have studied if you could have gone to school?" And she said, "I would have wanted to be a nurse, even a teacher or chef." And she's so good at it and I'm like, "That's the whole reason why they came was because they couldn't get their education. They wanted for us to get our education." [tears begin to roll from her eyes and her voice cracked]

Lorena felt a deep sense of gratitude because she recognized that the education she had already completed and was continuing, given her familial history, was a privilege. From a comparative perspective, family members who were her age in Mexico—due to employment or familial obligations—were typically pushed out of school before having the opportunity to fulfill their educational aspirations. Lorena, like many other undocumented students, had to concurrently work multiple low-paying jobs to finance their undergraduate education. While all the students experienced levels of mental and emotional stress, historically speaking, these students understood their educational predicament remained more promising than that of their families.

For example, Lorena elaborated:

> I see some of my cousins in Mexico and I know that they still can't afford college and I'm here. I struggle, I do. I have to have jobs everywhere. I clean, I work at a restaurant, all the stuff that I do, but I can still do it. I can still get my education even with all these struggles, so I'm just really grateful.

Lorena's description highlights how formal education can be understood as a byproduct of migration and of familial sacrifice that leverages a degree of access and opportunity leading to *algo mejor*, something better. Through collective experiences and communal memory, Lorena's mother made clear that her education was not to be taken for granted. In fact, Lorena also recalled that, when she was in elementary school, her mother would send her to school even amidst

complaints of feeling ill. Her mother was aware that if Lorena was indeed sick, the school nurse would call her to be sent home. Besides not having the flexibility in her employment to stay home with her daughter, this was another way Lorena attributes her parents' strictness about attending school as a positive factor in her education. If her parents would not have been so determined for her to attend school regularly, she believes she would not be where she is right now—enrolled in a graduate program and studying to be a teacher.

Another participant, Gloria was enrolled in a graduate program in architecture, her familial story of migration began with her father first coming to the United States at 17 years old, seeking to escape agricultural work in Mexico. Like other immigrants, Gloria's father heard stories of working in the United States for a short period , earning what they believed to be "easy money" and then returning to Mexico to live an improved life because dollars went a long way in Mexico back then. Along with his older brother, Gloria's father was able to save money to buy a house and eventually returned to Mexico and married Gloria's mother. Upon his return, he purchased a piece of land in Mexico and started his own ranch and began purchasing and investing in livestock. For some time, her family lived a comfortable lifestyle allowing Gloria to attend a private school. Things changed very quickly after her family experienced a financial crisis. When Gloria was eight years old in 1992, her father's business went bankrupt, leading her parents to make the decision for the family to migrate to the United States.

Migration to the United States was the family's way of providing for Gloria and her siblings the educational and career opportunities that they could no longer afford in Mexico. Enrolled in U.S. schools, Gloria quickly learned about negative stereotypes associated with Mexicans and women. She prioritized her academics and excelled in school seeking to combat racist nativist thinking (Perez Huber, Lopez, Malagon, Vélez, & Solorzano, 2008) by proving to people that undocumented or not, one's potential was not limited by race or citizenship status. These first-hand experiences of migration and marginalization were key in her developing her consciousness and taking advantage of the educational opportunities provided to her. Gloria, who was studying to be an architect, describes the influence her parents' struggles had on her:

> My parents went through so much that they didn't want to see us go through it. They would tell us, "You guys don't want to go through this, you don't want to be treated like this all your life." My dad was very adamant about us getting an education so that we wouldn't be looked down upon by other people, and that we would be able to decide what we wanted to do with our lives. Both of my parents, since they weren't able to achieve a formal education, it wasn't because they didn't want to, it was just because of life circumstances that didn't allow them. They knew that would be a possibility for us. So they said, "You guys really have to do this." My dad would come home from work and say, "You guys don't want to be working 18 hours a day." That was what really did it for me.

While Gloria and her family could have remained living in Mexico, she knew her family would not have been able to provide the types of educational opportunities she was eventually afforded in the United States. Seeing her parents work hard to create "life circumstances that *did*

allow" for Gloria and her siblings to "achieve a formal education…[is] what really did it for" her, providing needed perspective. Students' collective experiences of migration and communal memories of education (Bernal, 2001) informed their agency in growing up undocumented at the margins of U.S. society. This led students to remain motivated to make the most of the challenges and opportunities they faced.

**Lessons of Struggle and Survival in the United States**

Students held a communal memory of the difficulties their families experienced as immigrants in the United States. These experiences of students bearing witness to struggle imparted the teaching and learning of everyday life (Bernal, 2001) necessary for their survival. Parents strategically exposed their children to these hardships through first-hand experience in labor-intensive work environments. Experiencing dehumanizing working conditions alongside their parents helped shape student understandings of the type of work they did not want to do.

David, a second-year law student at the large public university, recalled migrating to the United States at the age of five with his six siblings, all undocumented. David's parents had initially migrated to work in the U.S. and temporarily left their children behind, seeking to pay off accumulated debts from a failing small business. Their small business in Mexico had experienced inventory theft that ultimately snowballed, and they could not pay their mounting debts. After living in the United States for one year and trying to save, David's parents realized it would be easier to remain in the United States, save additional money, and instead bring David and his siblings to reunite the whole family. David recalled the type of work he witnessed his parents partaking in, thus shaping his views of the type of work he did not want to do. David described that as a ten-year-old he was not interested in cleaning, gardening, or doing the physical labor and service that his parents undertook. The teaching and learning of everyday life had profoundly shaped him:

> I think of my parents' experience, seeing my mom go to work at two in the morning and she would come back home at eleven. I didn't really get to see her much. She would come home exhausted, it was hard work. I just saw that and I was like, "That's not the life that I want." Even with my dad too, the unemployment that he went through, it got to the point that he had to look for and recycle cans to make ends meet and he would take me with him. He showed me what it means to struggle. I had to help him and he also took my little brother too. My dad took us and I got to see that and I was like, "This is not what I want." This is not life and they made it clear to us, that's the life that you have to live through if you don't take advantage of educational opportunities. That's the struggle that people have to go through that are working class.

David's struggles tell of his family's experience reflecting the precarious nature of working-class immigrant labor (Milkman, 2020). Sadly for him, David did not see his mother much during this time in his life due to the irregular hours of her work schedule. David's father taught him and his younger brother an important lesson—that recycling is humbling yet dignified

work where all work counts in a context of prolonged unemployment. The teaching and learning of everyday life in the context of unemployment and economic struggle for David and others provided important lessons. His chosen career pathway of a lawyer was personally fulfilling for David because both parents had less than elementary school education. Although his parents were unable to provide guidance about education in the United States, these experiences served as important lessons for David, allowing him to understand the struggles and dehumanizing conditions that working-class people experience due to their citizenship status and low levels of education.

The teaching and learning of everyday life (Bernal, 2001), including exposure to employment with a high degree of exploitation and economic stability, helped shape how students viewed their own education. Adela, a Latin American master's degree student who came to the United States at the age of four, also spoke of her parents' role in her education and the influence they had on her to achieve her academic goals and dreams of attending graduate school. Adela's family struggled early on, having to live with and share a room with other recently arrived immigrants. Adela described in detail:

> My parents did all types of jobs. Beginning with my mom when we first arrived, she did babysitting. They packaged book items for places like Costco or big chain stores. Babysitting, she did marketing. Then my dad was employed at this factory as well for the longest time and he disassembled cardboard boxes. He also worked up north in the fields and then he worked at another factory. Then they decided to start their own small business. You know what's very interesting about my parents? What I am very grateful for is that they've been so thrifty all along. It's to the point my mom is so cheap but because of that they were able to save enough money to start a small business. That's why I always think you know they're really representing the American Dream, if other people could just see how hard they work and they pay their taxes. You know all they ever wanted was to provide us with a better future.

Adela's parents were able to eventually establish their own small grocery store and purchase a mobile home. An essential procedure in helping them establish a small grocery store occurred in 1994 when they found an attorney who supported them in obtaining a work permit and a social security number. With the additional benefits and privileges conferred by this change in their immigration status, they could obtain driver's licenses. Now with a store, Adela assisted her parents about 8 hours a week, supporting them with administrative tasks on weekends such as record keeping and necessary paperwork that needed to be submitted online. Adela's support was essential since they had no prior education or preparation in running a business and did not know how to use a computer. Speaking of these experiences, and despite her parents' own limited formal education, Adela indicated feeling supported by her parents:

> It was my parents, I feel if I could attribute my education to anything or anyone, it was them. I mean even though they couldn't tell me to go talk to your counselor or

> explain specific things about the degree. They always had my back, so I felt like I could really do whatever I needed to do. It was them.

Adela considered her parents to be the primary motivation that led her to enroll in a graduate school program. A benefit of the everyday teachings and learnings of working alongside her parents was the appreciation for the value of saving money, even adopting her parents' thrifty spending as a strategy to pay for her education. Her narrative and that of other students centralized the importance that many immigrants place on the family as a system of support and reciprocal expectations. Adela recalls the ways her parents engaged her as she was growing up:

> We always ate dinner together when I was young. Up to that point, my parents started doing more of the business thing and it was always like, "Okay, what's up in the world?" They always wanted to hear my opinion, they always talked to us, "And how was your day?" So I always remember that and always telling us that we needed to go to school because we didn't need to come home. You know my dad would always come home kinda stinky. He was always like, "I don't want you to come home like me," and just those conversations. I remember them clearly to this day, you know all of that advice they always gave us has remained with me. So, I think, even to this day I think it's amazing that my parents don't necessarily understand this whole graduate school thing yet they are so supportive.

The open communication that Adela held with her parents facilitated opportunities for her to learn important life lessons. In working alongside her parents in the family business, Adela supported them as they did not possess the skills or technological know-how to operate a computer to run the family business. She developed a deeper appreciation for her parents, who, despite not understanding the context of higher education in the United States completely trusted and supported her educational endeavors and desire to pursue an undergraduate and then a graduate degree. The teachings and learnings of everyday life these students experienced alongside their families as undocumented immigrants played an important role in helping them maximize the opportunities they were afforded for attaining a formal education. These lessons of struggle and survival are important because these parents demonstrate that despite not having high levels for formal education, they reveal a high degree of investment in their children's education.

**Familial Subtle Resistance Strategies**

The research participants in this study indicated their parents' support was fundamental to their advancement across their higher education journeys. Even in a politically progressive state like California, a system of constrained inclusion (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017) limits higher education pathways for undocumented students. According to Negrón-Gonzales (2017), in a system of constrained inclusion, there is a "disconnect between the promise of inclusion embodied in recent legislation" (p. 105) and the particular ways that citizenship status hinders higher education access and persistence for many undocumented students. In this study, students reported their families employing subtle resistance strategies to support them despite not being familiar with the inner functions of the U.S. educational system. In what follows, we provide two examples that illustrate

how students' families employed subtle resistance strategies to temper the hindrances associated with citizenship status.

Diego, a graduate student in engineering, was the only undocumented person in a mixed-status family. Had it not been for the untimely death of his grandmother before his birth, Diego would have been born in the United States. As his grandmother laid on her deathbed in Mexico, Diego's family rushed to be by her side, she eventually passed away. The family was unable to return to the U.S. before Diego's birth. Consequently, Diego and his younger sister were born in Mexico. However, his sister was able to apply for and eventually obtain her legal permanent residence as a minor. Diego "aged out" before his application of adjustment of status was decided and remained the only undocumented person in his family. As Diego completed high school, he only sought a vocational career given the constraints his citizenship status would place on his higher education opportunities. Diego explained how his father held a deep sense of responsibility to help him, given his citizenship status in comparison to his documented siblings:

> My objective was to become a mechanic, take some classes in car mechanics, but then when I graduated high school my dad was very supportive. He said, "You know what, there are no colleges or universities here, but we can move anywhere you want. I'll sell this house and buy a house somewhere else. We'll just move, I am not working right now." So I took his word, I looked for a university and it was Treeland State, the one I liked and that's how we moved to Treeland.

Diego's father decided to move the family to be closer to Treeland so his son could have a greater possibility of fulfilling his educational aspirations. In turn, Diego's plans changed from attending the local community college and completing a vocational career, to instead pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering. One of the most prohibitive costs for undocumented students tends to be living expenses; in moving to a nearby community, his family would be supporting him with one of the most significant costs associated with completing his education. Diego's father also supported his educational journey by serving as his fiscal sponsor and taking out loans to help pay for his educational and living costs. These subtle resistance strategies of mobilizing familial resources enacted by Diego's father made Diego's higher education pathway tangible. As U.S. citizens, the access to resources that Diego's family had at their disposal made a significant difference in being able to support him. For other students whose parents and family members were also undocumented, though, accessing tangible resources in that way was not possible.

In some instances, the wisdom and guidance espoused by parents with their children led students to acquire an interest in specific areas of study. This was the case for Antonio, who was a graduate student working towards a master's in mechanical engineering. His determination was instilled early on by his father, who highlighted the importance of obtaining an education. Antonio's family grew up in Michoacán, a small and impoverished town. His father worked the land of Antonio's grandfather. The time came when the family was no longer able to live off the land, and his father decided to migrate to the United States in 1993, bringing the family along in

1995. During those two years, his mother had to work, and his father would send little money while settling in the United States. Antonio confided:

> Well the truth, like I tell you, my parents always have told me to study, they never gave us a limit like go to college and that is it. But they have always instilled in us to continue studying, since I was little they instilled that in my mind, to continue studying. They would be the first ones that influenced me the most since I was small, since I was little they would tell me, tell us to stay in school and get good grades.

Antonio credited his parents for being the biggest influence in his life and for consistently pushing for a formal education for their children. Antonio's father in particular was a notable influence in his decision to pursue a degree in a mathematics-related discipline. Shortly after graduating with his bachelor's degree in engineering, Antonio took an exam that, if he passed, would help bring him a step closer to earning his license. He recounted the experience,

> I started the test in the morning, and they took my calculator away and told me I could go during lunchtime and buy [the right] one real quick. I said, "Oh well." I took the test like that, it was engineering math. I started doing like right there multiplication, division on the side of the paper. During lunchtime, I went to Walmart and bought the calculator, now for the second part of the test I had the calculator and passed it like that. I went with two other friends [who also took the test] and they didn't pass it. So everybody asked how did you do it, if I cheated or what? I said, "No, no, it's all here [pointing to his head]." It's because here [U.S.] with the technology, they make you so accustomed to using calculators. But when we were kids my father made us learn our times tables really well. He would get home from work [and ask us], "What's this? 5 x 6," and we would need to answer and sometimes he would even leave us tests to do while he was at work. I guess I learned my math fundamentals pretty well.

Antonio's ability to successfully pass an engineering competency exam despite not having a calculator for part of it is a testament to having a solid mathematical foundation. His father, who was his first teacher, inculcated a love and appreciation for mathematics, helping him develop a strong math identity. During elementary school, his father would have him recite his multiplication tables every day before dinner. In a field where Latinx students are historically underrepresented, the subtle resistance strategies employed by Antonio's father provided Antonio with a level of preparation that led to his success. The use of pedagogies of the home employed by Antonio's father in teaching math skills created a positive association for Antonio with the subject, positioning him on a trajectory to access high-level math. Furthermore, the familial encouragement to "Go as far as you can" paved a solid foundation that led to a high academic output in school for Antonio and propelled him, in part, to pursue an undergraduate major and graduate degree in engineering. Educators need to cultivate and nurture the success of Latinx undocumented students drawing from home-based pedagogical and asset-based approaches by building on what these students already bring with them from home into educational spaces.

## Discussion and Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

An increasing number of Latinx immigrant students with varying degrees of citizenship status are entering higher education institutions every year in the United States. Educational leaders in colleges and universities across the country must be prepared to understand and respond to the unique social-political context and particular experiences of this population. This paper has examined how undocumented college students draw on the forms of support they receive from their families around education. By focusing specifically on how these families utilize home-based pedagogical approaches (Delgado Bernal, 2002), our findings revealed three ways that parents provide support to their children in higher education contexts.

The first finding highlights the significance of familial histories explored through collective experiences and communal memories of migration and how these shape students' educational aspirations. For Lorena and Gloria, communal memories of their parents being pushed out of the educational system provide a perspective of their own educational experiences. As Bernal (2001) reminds us, communal memories are stories that "provided an understanding of certain situations and explanations about why things happened under certain conditions" (p. 625). The lessons learned from these stories can inform the consciousness (Freire, 2000) and agency development of students. Communal memories can transform feelings of shame from parents being school pushouts into feelings of immense pride, knowing they give their all to provide their children opportunities to access the education they never had. By focusing specifically on migratory processes retrospectively, this work offers a comparative perspective on experiences of marginality. Lorena, for example, while working multiple jobs and struggling to pay for her university education, remained grateful to be able to achieve her education, unlike her cousins in Mexico who could not afford college. These examples contribute to the literature and offer a rich description of ways that immigrant families support the educational advancement of their children through collective experience.

This paper also provides considerations for pedagogical approaches that center the teaching and learning of everyday happenings. Ethnic studies and critical race approaches center the experiences of communities of color and other marginalized groups by including and validating their experiences, their ways of knowing and being, and how they resist. The participants in this study were taught and learned about the challenges their parents experienced in their everyday lives, leading them to "develop the skills to confront oppressive conditions"" (Bernal, 2001, p. 625) as they accessed and navigated institutions of higher education. The exposure to these lessons of struggle allowed participants to understand how "individuals negotiate and struggle with structures and create meanings of their own interactions" (p. 625). Experiencing these inequitable contexts provides these students with a unique vantage point to be able to understand conditions of struggle and power. In the present political moment, when critical educators are facing a backlash from conservative forces daring to teach about social inequality, racism, and other marginalizing structures, ethnic studies pedagogies are needed now more than ever. Centering the teaching and learning of everyday life of communities of color in leadership preparation programs will go a

long way in the development of culturally responsive educational leaders (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

This study provides important considerations for policymakers interested in creating more equitable contexts for undocumented immigrant students and their families. The students in the study revealed the "subtle resistance strategies" their families used to support navigating higher education institutions. Diego, who grew up in a mixed-status family, was fortunate to have the support of his documented family who were able to relocate and provide him material support. This subtle resistance strategy led to a change of plans for Diego, from a vocational career to pursuing a career in engineering. While Diego's family was fortunate to have a greater degree of resources at their disposal as U.S. citizens, most undocumented families cannot leverage resources in that manner. These subtle resistance strategies on behalf of these families are admirable, but they are insufficient to address systemic problems. To truly support the access and persistence of undocumented students in higher education, policymakers should create pathways for legalization for undocumented students and their families. While in the present political context, it is unlikely that a deeply divided Congress will pass immigration reform, some analysts[5] speculate there is a possibility that Democrats can utilize their slim majorities through a process of budget reconciliation to do so. It is not hard to predict that the legalization of millions of undocumented people across the country would have a positive impact on the higher education attendance and completion rates of undocumented students. DACA beneficiaries in one study (Wong et al., 2012), for example, have shown increases in labor force participation, economic earnings, and greater social inclusion. Another study (Patler, Hamilton, Meagher, & Savinar, 2019), found some short-term mental health benefits that accrue to DACA beneficiaries may disappear without long-term certainty of its existence. Should the Biden Administration be able to create a pathway toward legalization for millions of undocumented Americans, these policy changes would be transformative and have a more permanent and profound impact on these students across the educational system.

This work also suggests for scholars and practitioners all along the PreK to PhD pipeline to be attuned to non-normative ways families support their children. The immigrant families in this study navigate the sociopolitical context alongside their children in revealing ways. Most of them were the first in their respective families to access higher education and carried extensive pressures to perform well academically. While the sample of students in the study had already achieved a great deal of success by enrolling in graduate programs, they also experienced high levels of anxiety and often coped in unhealthy ways foregoing rest and sleep and taking on extensive employment and familial responsibilities, among other things. The approaches and strategies parents utilize to meet the needs of their children are potent examples of ways educational leaders in institutions of higher education can rethink how they support students by validating the home-based knowledge students bring with them.

While the legislative context in the nation's capital is one of continuous gridlock, the federal government's executive branch can play an essential role in expanding access to federal resources. For example, recent moves by the Biden Administration's Secretary of Education

Miguel Cardona reversed rules that previously denied the allocation of federal stimulus dollars under COVID relief to undocumented students (*Business Insider*, May 11, 2021). This rule change, according to Secretary Cardona, "will include all students, and we want to make sure that all students have an opportunity to have access to funds to help get them back on track." Initial stimulus expenditures also supported a small number of undocumented immigrants who are holders of Social Security Numbers, like those who arrived in the U.S. under a visa.

Finally, a limitation of this study is that data collection occurred before the enactment of DACA. Since the enactment of DACA, hundreds of thousands of additional students across the country have experienced more significant degrees of access and institutional support than existed before its implementation. DACA has facilitated students to obtain employment and employment with higher pay, start their own businesses, secure employment with health insurance, travel more, navigate higher education institutions easier, and other tangible benefits (Capps, Fix, & Zong, 2017). Regardless of the occupational benefits associated with DACA beneficiaries, a sizeable undocumented population still does not qualify for DACA. This study is particularly instructive for undocumented students who similarly to the participants in this study may not qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals due to age restrictions. as several of the research participants would not have qualified for DACA.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we examine the experiences of undocumented Chicanx/Latinx immigrant graduate students and how they have benefitted from the home-based pedagogies they have learned from their families. In viewing these pedagogies as such, we can distill some of the specific resources that positively impact their aspirations and persistence in higher education. Furthermore, understanding these familial forms of support can be a critical component used to educate educational leaders committed to asset-based approaches to being more culturally responsive.

The results of this study have important implications for educators and educational leaders committed to asset-based approaches as they centers the experiences of undocumented Latinx students and their families, highlighting familial understandings of resistance to marginalization. Research on the aspirations of undocumented graduate Latinx students provides a window into the decisive role that families play in fostering agency and persistence. For Latinx undocumented students, who experience greater degrees of structural vulnerability, it is critically important to create spaces where they feel affirmed and supported. Educational leaders committed to culturally, and community-responsive education must recognize and reinforce the role of the family in university spaces.

## End Notes

[1] Mills College, founded in 1852, is a small independent college historically serving women and non-binary students in California's Bay Area.

[2] We utilize Cuellar's (2014) definition of HSI: "Hispanic Serving Institutions or HSI's, are a federal designation. HSI eligibility criteria includes enrolling 25% or more total undergraduate

full-time equivalent (FTE) Latina/o/x students and at least 50% of all students must be low-income" (p. 500). Once an institution is identified as an HSI, these colleges and universities can apply for competitive funding.

[3] Assembly Bill 540 paved the way for undocumented students the opportunity to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities.

[4] The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is an Obama era policy that grants administrative relief from deportation to those that qualify and apply for it. Eligible immigrants are able to receive protection from deportation and are also provided with a permit.

[5] While it is uncertain if it is even possible, National Public Radio and the Center for American Progress report in the summer of 2021 that the budget reconciliation process maybe the only way that a process towards legalization of undocumented residents could be put forth. The Democrats could in effect have a Senate majority, by having Vice President Kamala Harris cast a tie breaking vote (Grisales, 2021; Wolgin, 2021).

## REFERENCES

Abrego, L. J. (2006). "I can't go to college because I don't have papers": Incorporation patterns of Latino undocumented youth. *Latino Studies*, *4*(3), 212–231. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600200

Abrego, L. J., & Negrón-Gonzales, G. (Eds.). (2020). *We are not dreamers: Undocumented scholars theorize undocumented life in the United States*. Duke University Press. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12376

Abrego, L. J., & Gonzales, R. G. (2010). Blocked paths, uncertain futures: The postsecondary education and labor market prospects of undocumented Latino youth. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, *15*(1-2), 144–157. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/10824661003635168

Annamma, S. A., & Handy, T. (2021). Sharpening justice through DisCrit: A contrapuntal analysis of education. *Educational Researcher*, *50*(1), 41–50. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20953838

Auerbach, S. (2002). "Why do they give the good classes to some and not to others?" Latino parent narratives of struggle in a college access program. *Teachers College Record*, *104*(7), 1369–1392.

Auerbach, S. (2006). "If the student is good, let him fly": Moral support for college among Latino immigrant parents. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *5*(4), 275–292. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532771xjle0504_4

Babbie, E. R. (1998). *The practice of social research*. International Thomson Publishing Services.

Bernal, D. D. (1998). Using a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research. *Harvard Educational Review*, *68*(4), 555–583. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.68.4.5wv1034973g22q48

Bernal, D. D. (2001). Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *14*(5), 623–639. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110059838

Bernal, D. D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative inquiry*, *8*(1), 105–126. Retrieved from

https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800107
Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th ed.). Pearson Education Group, Inc.
Buenavista, T. L. (2018). Model (undocumented) minorities and "illegal" immigrants: Centering Asian Americans and US carcerality in undocumented student discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *21*(1), 78–91. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248823
Capps, R., Fix, M., & Zong, J. (2017). The education and work profiles of the DACA population. *Migration Policy Institute*, 1–16.
Carreón, G. P., Drake, C., & Barton, A. C. (2005). The importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal*, *42*(3), 465–498. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312042003465
Ceja, M. (2004). Chicana college aspirations and the role of parents: Developing educational resiliency. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *3*(4), 338–362. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192704268428
Conchas, G. Q., & Acevedo, N. (2020). *The Chicanx/o/a dream: Hope, resistance, and educational success.* Harvard Education Press
Covarrubias, A., & Lara, A. (2014). The undocumented (im) migrant educational pipeline: The influence of citizenship status on educational attainment for people of Mexican origin. *Urban Education*, *49*(1), 75–110. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912470468
Covarrubias, A., Nava, P. E., Lara, A., Burciaga, R., Vélez, V. N., & Solorzano, D. G. (2018). Critical race quantitative intersections: A testimonio analysis. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *21*(2), 253–273. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2017.1377412
Cuellar, M. (2014). The impact of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), emerging HSIs, and non-HSIs on Latina/o academic self-concept. *The Review of Higher Education*, *37*(4), 499–530. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2014.0032
Diaz-Strong, D., Gómez, C., Luna-Duarte, M. E., & Meiners, E. R. (2011). Purged: Undocumented students, financial aid policies, and access to higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *10*(2), 107–119. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192711401917
Ed Data. (May, 2021). California public schools demographics. Retrieved from https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA
Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniv. ed.). New York, NY: Continuum.
Enriquez, L. E., Hernandez, M. M., Millán, D., & Vera, D. V. (2019). Mediating illegality: Federal, state, and institutional policies in the educational experiences of undocumented college students. *Law & Social Inquiry*, *44*(3), 679–703. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1017/lsi.2018.16
Gaitan, C. D. (2004). *Involving Latino families in schools: Raising student achievement through home-school partnerships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
Gonzales, R. G. (2015). *Lives in limbo*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520962415
Gonzales, R. G., Ellis, B., Rendón-García, S. A., & Brant, K. (2018). (Un) authorized transitions: Illegality, DACA, and the life course. *Research in Human Development*, *15*(3-4), 345–359. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2018.1502543
Gonzales, R. G., Suárez-Orozco, C., & Dedios-Sanguineti, M. C. (2013). No place to belong:

Contextualizing concepts of mental health among undocumented immigrant youth in the United States. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(8), 1174–1199. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213487349

Grisales, C. (2021, August 9). Democrats are trying to use $3.5 trillion spending bill to pass immigration reform. *NPR*. Retrieved from https://www.npr.org/2021/08/09/1026207513/democrats-are-trying-to-use-3-5-trillion-spending-bill-to-pass-immigration-refor

Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2007*(120), 7–24. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.254

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. *Annual Synthesis*.

Khalifa, M. A., Gooden, M. A., & Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 1272–1311. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316630383

Ishimaru, A. M. (2019). From family engagement to equitable collaboration. *Educational Policy*, *33*(2), 350–385. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904817691841

Lara, A. (2014). *Navigating critical terrain: The decision making process of undocumented Latina/o graduate students* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of California, Los Angeles.

Lara, A., & Nava, P. E. (2018). Achieving the dream, uncertain futures: The postbaccalaureate decision-making process of Latinx undocumented students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *17*(2), 112–131. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192718758855

Lopez, G. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review*, *71*(3), 416–438. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.71.3.43x7k542x023767u

Manzo, R. D., & Deeb-Sossa, N. (2018). Political maternal involvement: A comparative study of Mexican mothers' activism to address school board's deficit practices. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *49*(4), 352–370. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12264

Manzo, R. D. (2016). Parent involvement practices of farmworking immigrant mothers in a rural community. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, *10*(1), 53–79.

Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Milkman, R. (2020). *Immigrant labor and the new precariat*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Muñoz, S. M., & Vigil, D. (2018). Interrogating racist nativist microaggressions and campus climate: How undocumented and DACA college students experience institutional legal violence in Colorado. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *11*(4), 451–466. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000078

Nava, P. E. (2012). *Sin sacrificio no hay recompensa: Apoyo as (Im) migrant parental engagement in farmworking families of the California Central Valley* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of California, Los Angeles.

Nava, P. E. (2017). Abuelita storytelling: From pain to possibility and implications for higher education. *Storytelling, Self, Society*, *13*(2), 151–169. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.13110/storselfsoci.13.2.0151

Negrón-Gonzales, G. (2017). Constrained inclusion: Access and persistence among undocumented community college students in California's Central Valley. *Journal of Hispanic Higher*

*Education*, *16*(2), 105–122. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717697753

Negrón-Gonzales, G., Abrego, L., & Coll, K. (2015). Introduction: Immigrant Latina/o youth and illegality: Challenging the politics of deservingness. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, *9*(3), 7–10.

Oliverez, P.M. (2006). Too Little, But Not Too Late: A Discussion of Policies and Practices Shaping College Access for Undocumented Immigrant Students in the United States, Newsletter of the Association for the Study of Higher Education 16(1).

Paredes Scribner, S. M., & Fernández, E. (2017). Organizational politics of parental engagement: The intersections of school reform, anti-immigration policies, and Latinx parent organizing. *Educational Policy*, *31*(6), 895-920. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904817719527

Patler, C., Hamilton, E., Meagher, K., & Savinar, R. (2019). Uncertainty about DACA may undermine its positive impact on health for recipients and their children. *Health Affairs*, *38*(5), 738–745. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2018.05495

Pérez, W., Cortés, R. D., Ramos, K., & Coronado, H. (2010). "Cursed and blessed": Examining the socioemotional and academic experiences of undocumented Latina and Latino college students. New directions for student services, 2010(131), 35-51. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.366

Perez Huber, L. (2009). Challenging racist nativist framing: Acknowledging the community cultural wealth of undocumented Chicana college students to reframe the immigration debate. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(4), 704–730. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.r7j1xn011965w186

Perez Huber, L., Lopez, C. B., Malagon, M. C., Vélez, V., & Solorzano, D. G. (2008). Getting beyond the "symptom," acknowledging the "disease": Theorizing racist nativism. *Contemporary Justice Review*, *11*(1), 39–51. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580701850397

Perez Huber, L., & Malagon, M. (2007). Silenced struggles: The experiences of Latina and Latino. Retrieved from doi:https://doi.org/10.1079/PNS2004399

Rabiee, F. (2004). Focus-group interview and data analysis. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society, 655-660.

Rocha, J. (2020). Pedagogies of sacrifices: the use of narratives as socialization in families and a human resource for resilience. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *24*(2), 186–209. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2020.1753670

Santos, J. (2006). *The paradox of immigration policy and higher education access: State responses to federal immigration policy*. Washington, D.C.: Institution, State, and Federal Policy Working Group.

Solórzano, D. G. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 11*(1), 121–136. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236926

Solórzano, D. G., & Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban education*, *36*(3), 308-342. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002

Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *14*(4), 471–495. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365

Stanton-Salazar, R. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review*, *67*(1), 1–41. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.67.1.140676g74018u73k

Suárez-Orozco, C., & Lopez Hernández, G. (2020). "Waking up every day with the worry": A mixed-methods study of anxiety in undocumented Latinx college students. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *11*. Retrieved from doi:10.3389/fpsyt.2020.568167

Valdés, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools: An ethnographic portrait*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Vélez, V. N. (2016). Organizing for change: Latinx im/migrant parents, school decision-making, and the racial politics of parent leadership in school reform. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, *10*(3), 108–128.

Wolgin, P. E. (2021, July 1). A pathway to citizenship and economic growth through budget reconciliation. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2021/07/01/501212/pathway-citizenship-economic-growth-budget-reconciliation/

Wong, K., Shadduck-Hernández?. Inzunza, F., Monroe, J., Narro, V., & Valenzuela, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Undocumented and unafraid: Tam Tran, Cinthya Felix, and the immigrant youth movement*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education.

Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(4), 659–691. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.m6867014157m707l

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# MAKING MOVIDAS: CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP THROUGH CONOCIMIENTO IN AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RETREAT

**Luis E. Poza, Lilly Pinedo-Gangai, Magdalena Barrera, Rebeca Burciaga, and Marcos Pizarro**
*San José State University*

## AUTHOR NOTE

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Luis E. Poza, San José State University, Department of Teacher Education, One Washington Square, San José, CA 95192-0074. E-mail: luis.poza@sjsu.edu.

## ABSTRACT

This educational case study examines the efforts of one Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) to counter deficit narratives and provide institutional as well as interpersonal supports for Latinx student success through a Student Leadership Retreat. We consider these activities and students' experiences therein through the lenses of Latinx leadership and Gloria Anzaldúa's notion of *conocimiento*. To do so, we rely on established methods in Chicanx Studies that center the voices of participants and communities to foreground emic systems of knowledge and activity qualitatively. Specifically, we examined students' experiences in programming undergirded by *conocimiento* (iterative and dialogic understanding of ourselves and others), *cariño* (care for self and others), and *confianza* (trust) in contrast to more traditionally individualistic, competitive, and transactional arrangements within higher education.

***Keywords***: higher education, Hispanic-Serving Institution, student leadership, conocimiento, student affairs

> The retreat honestly had a huge impact on my life. It made me realize who I am as a person, and the importance my culture has. I developed a lot of great relationships with faculty and my [student] familia [so] that I know I have people to turn to to support and help me. It taught me so much about who I am, and it was something I could not stop talking about.
>
> -Yazmin (Pseudonym), January 24, 2020

## Introduction

Latinx[1] students have markedly improved outcomes in the last 20 years with undergraduate and post-baccalaureate enrollment rates more than doubling and degrees awarded more than tripling (de Brey et al., 2019). Despite these gains, disparities persist as six-year graduation rates for Latinx students still considerably lag behind those for white and Asian students (de Brey et al., 2019) and Latinx students disproportionately enroll in two-year colleges, where they face notable obstacles to transferring and degree completion (Castro & Cortez, 2017; Crisp & Núñez, 2014). Moreover, qualitative research indicates that Latinx students endure racial microaggressions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Tello & Lonn, 2017; Yosso et al., 2009), narratives of color-evasiveness[2] undermining their lived experiences (Vue et al., 2017), and feelings of isolation (Castro & Cortez, 2017).

Despite such evidence of Latinx students' adversities in higher education and the structural inequities in their pre-collegiate trajectories (e.g., Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Gándara et al., 2012; Solórzano et al., 2005; Zarate & Burciaga, 2010), deficit narratives pervade discussions of educational disparities (Valencia, 2012). These perspectives present their own barrier to improving outcomes insofar as they require shifting mindsets and not just implementation of new programs or resources.

For the particular Hispanic Serving Institution[3] (HSI) in California that is the focus of this case study, such inequities drive recent and ongoing efforts to improve experiences and outcomes for racially minoritized students. Previously, the university took a color-evasive approach, believing that programs developed for the general student population would help all undergraduates, including BIPOC[4] students for whom there was particular concern. As noted within Critical Race Theory (Gotanda, 1991) and in scholarship about Latinx students in higher education (Salinas, Jr., 2015; Suárez, 2015), color-evasive approaches presume that inequities manifest across racial lines and can be remedied without specific attention to racial classifications, downplaying the ways that resources and opportunities have been historically withheld from minoritized racial groups. As such, approaches that ignore racial inequities ultimately reify unjust conditions. The interventions at the focal HSI, while advancing supposedly universally relevant supports, included notable instances of pathologizing BIPOC students. This happened through reliance on deficit orientations to devise remedies such as study skills or time management workshops, presuming that students' lack of success was due to poor work ethic or lacking English proficiency rather than considering the ways they were racialized and marginalized in their academic experiences. The persistent equity gaps at the institution, which were concerning given

its HSI designation, proved such approaches ineffective and spurred the creation of a task force to develop and implement a student-centered model for Latinx student engagement and academic success. By January 2018, this task force became the Chicanx/Latinx Student Success Center ("Centro"). Centro built on the model of the task force and implemented comprehensive programming that connected Latinx students' academic and ethnic/cultural/racial identities. This was highlighted by an annual Student Leadership Retreat (SLR) for first-year students (including transfer students) in which 50-60 students left campus for a weekend to engage in profound identity-exploration, community-building, learning about deficit narratives and counter-narratives, and discussion of how to apply learning from the retreat to their lives on campus and in their communities as leaders.

The new approach, foregrounding student awareness of individual and collective identity, understanding racialized power relations within historical and sociopolitical contexts, and strategies for academic success within a supportive community marked a radical departure from the previous color-evasive institutional practices. Securing Centro, the SLR, and additional such programming required informal, and at times, subversive coordination, what Espinoza and colleagues (2018) call *movidas*. In this work, we examine the Student Leadership Retreat at our HSI in the 2019-2020 academic year as a case study (Merriam, 1988) of *movidas* and experiences that actively disrupted deficit narratives about students and provided participants with opportunities for meaningful participation and agency in their development as learners and leaders. We are guided by two overarching questions:

1. What were students' experiences in the culturally sustaining programs and processes put in place through *movidas*, particularly the SLR?
2. How do complementary frameworks of Latinx leadership and conocimiento improve understanding of how these *movidas* support student success?

We begin with a literature review regarding practices (organizational and interpersonal) for supporting Latinx student success in higher education, including moves that foster Latinx student leadership and the literature on HSIs that is especially relevant to our context. We follow with our theoretical framework of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002), intertwining concepts of Latinx student leadership development. We then present our methods for data collection and analysis, including a description of the concepts undergirding the design of the SLR and situating our positionality within the work. We proceed with findings from analysis of debrief conversations with students and surveys after the SLR, and finally close with discussion of the implications of our findings from this case study toward broader practice across HSIs and serving Latinx students in higher education.

## Literature Review

The work of Centro and our own inquiry is substantially informed by previous scholarship on culturally-sustaining practices that seek "to perpetuate and foster--to sustain--linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" for Latinx youth in institutions of higher education (Paris, 2012, p. 93). In this review of relevant literature, we

consider organizational and implementational perspectives on the task of creating dignity-affirming and liberating educational settings, culminating with a focus on how these culturally-sustaining approaches align with literature on Latinx student leadership development.

**Interpersonal Factors**

Relevant literature highlights extensive interpersonal elements that support Latinx student success. Positive interactions with faculty members, including meaningful participation in activities such as research and campus-based employment, improve persistence outcomes demonstrably (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Crisp et al., 2015; Flink, 2018; García et al., 2019). Such positive interactions include the ability to speak Spanish with peers and faculty, teaching practices that affirm Latinx students' individual and collective experiences and cultural identities, and mentoring (García & Okhidoi, 2015; García et al., 2019; Tovar, 2015). Likewise, efforts by outreach staff to engage with students and families through asset-orientations and invitation of their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) help provide a sense of welcome, belonging, and reassurance for Latinx students encountering institutions of higher education (Mariscal et al., 2019). Counselors and advisers who incorporate culturally relevant practices into their relationships with students similarly provide integral information for navigating higher education. They also provide socioemotional supports to ameliorate feelings of isolation and inadequacy and to take action against discrimination (Tello & Lonn, 2017), including with counselors themselves being advocates for students in spaces of power (Cook et al., 2012). Even university administrators have important roles to play at the interpersonal level, given that they, too, can provide mentorship to students and, in public fashion, advocate for resources, services, and the dignity of Latinx students (García & Ramírez, 2018; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

**Organizing for Liberation**

The effectiveness of such interpersonal measures rests largely on their ability to shift cultural and structural paradigms. Scholarship on supporting Latinx students in higher education has called attention to the kinds of shifts required. Santiago (2012) notes that HSIs cannot be assumed to inherently improve Latinx educational attainment simply because they enroll a critical mass of Latinx students, but that conventional metrics of accountability in public policy likewise underestimate the efficacy of such institutions. Santiago, focusing on HSIs, recommends public policy discussions to promote concerted institutional efforts to recruit, retain, and graduate Latinx students that account for their specific circumstances and accountability metrics that acknowledge this work alongside conventional measures. Such policies, of course, are broadly applicable and perhaps even more relevant to predominantly white institutions (PWIs) where the discussions may be less tied to institutional mission.

Any efforts to improve outcomes for Latinx students must be guided by information about students' experiences in and out of school and about institutions themselves. Castro and Cortez (2017), examining the incorporation of Mexican and Mexican American community college transfer students to a four-year PWI, argue that institutions must adopt clear protocols for

introspection and process-mapping to ascertain how Latinx students experience the campus, including the spaces they frequent and the nature and quality of their interactions with staff, faculty, and administrative offices. Only through attention to these subjective elements of the college experience, the authors argue, can systemic change be fomented. Castro and Cortez (2017) explain:

> Programming aimed at students cannot be the sole response...because that kind of programming fails to address the culture of the institution. In this sense, cultivating a receptive culture is about turning the gaze inward toward the institution and away from individual students and student communities…Using a framework of lived experience and intersectionality holds promise for receiving [institutions] so that the broader campus context becomes the site of organizational change, not individual students themselves. (p. 89)

García and Dwyer (2018) echo this need to organize the institution with attention to students' experiences and note that messages of inclusiveness, equity, and diversity within an organizational mission matter most when students recognize and identify with that organizational identity. In their specific study, they found that students attending an HSI and an emerging HSI were keenly attuned not only to the HSI designation but to the institutional organization that either supported or undermined the supposed mission. For instance, some students noted that the designation rang hollow without significant Latinx representation in curriculum and positions of administrative power, as well as the half-hearted efforts by the institutions to actually recruit Latinx students from the neighboring communities. Indeed, institutions that promote Ethnic Studies within their offerings and support Educational Opportunity Programs[5] on their campuses demonstrably improve outcomes for Latinx students (García & Okhido, 2015).

Several important reviews of the literature on Latinx student success in higher education also highlight the centrality of institutional culture. Crisp and Nora (2010), Flink (2018), and Crisp et al., (2015) all find that students' perceptions of discrimination and campus racial climate generally are associated with persistence, reinforcing the need to attend to students' subjectivities. The reviews also identify other systemic elements, such as access to robust and varied streams of financial aid, opportunities to participate in culturally relevant campus programming including community service, and access to developmental courses as positively associated with Latinx student success.

Offering a comprehensive framework from the perspective of organizational theory, García (2018) outlines numerous dimensions that colleges and universities must consider to create a liberating campus environment for Latinx students. García advocates that HSIs pursue critical consciousness and community revitalization alongside conventional measures of academic success. Providing examples from a pair of transformative pre-collegiate summer programs for Latinx students, Gutiérrez, Hunter, and Arzubiaga (2009) challenge the convention of framing students with a lens of remediation by focusing on *re-mediation,* a fundamental reorganization of a learning ecology "with its focus on the sociohistorical influences on students' learning" that "disrupts the ideology of pathology linked with most approaches to remediation" (p. 13).

Reiterating the importance of diversity to Latinx student success (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Crisp et al., 2015), García (2018) adds that the membership of decolonized institutions must be multiracial and multiethnic, in turn requiring systemic policies to recruit and retain such a student body as well as faculty, staff, administration, trustees, and community partners. With respect to governance, a liberatory organization demands pluralistic and decentralized processes that deliberately incorporate the voices of historically marginalized groups informing the development of dynamic community standards that protect the community and ensure its progress (García, 2018, p. 140), relying on restorative and community-centered practices rather than punitive approaches to justice, and creating systemic incentive structures (e.g., in hiring, retention, and promotion processes for faculty) aligned to this holistic mission.

**Cultivating Latinx Student Leadership**

Lest strategies for Latinx student achievement and attainment remain within frameworks of adapting to oppressive systems, cultivating leadership also assures that students will be agents within their educational journeys. We review several frameworks of Latinx leadership in our theoretical framework but note for now that various conceptualizations accentuate that Latinx leadership includes facets of self and community understanding, personal and communitarian aspirations and purposes, and mutualistic relations of trust within collective mobilization (Bordas, 2001, 2013; Lozano, 2015).

In order to support Latinx students in their development within these frameworks, student organizations and leadership retreats have been noted as powerful opportunities. Beatty (2015) notes that participating in student organizations cultivates a sense of belonging and integration into campus life, and that ethnically focused organizations, in particular, provide space for building community and liminal spaces in which to counter deficit narratives, place them within appropriate historical and sociopolitical context, and gain more positive self-concept. In this context, Beatty (2015) offers that Latinx student leadership exercised within student organizations is understood as a form of activism seeking to transform personal learning conditions as well as social and institutional factors perpetuating oppression. Guardia (2015) similarly notes how within fraternities and sororities, Latinx students specifically can increase their cultural awareness, advocate for goals prioritized by the Latinx community, experience a familial atmosphere in often hostile institutional climates, and coalesce the Latinx community within a campus.

Of particular relevance to our inquiry, Salinas, Jr. (2015) examines student leadership retreats for Latinx students across institutions. Based on analysis of materials and responses from five institutions sponsoring such retreats, Salinas, Jr. notes the ways in which they promote skill development, communities of support for collective action and profound conversation, and ongoing self-reflection regarding individual and collective goals. Specifically, Salinas, Jr. finds that despite differences in the extent of student involvement in planning, the involvement of outside speakers or a campus academic entity such as a department or cultural center, and the nature of funding, retreats require thorough institutional support in order to deliver on their

potential to "provide a unique space for students to validate and empower their lived experiences of both privilege and oppression, while learning to navigate obstacles and successes" (p. 112).

One question that hangs over this body of literature is how to take the beneficial actions of individuals in staff and faculty roles and institutionalize them into an organization's ethos and systems. Our consideration in our methods section of *movidas* undertaken not only to address in-the-moment needs but to intentionally and permanently reorient institutional culture seeks to elucidate this process by analyzing the case of Centro and the SLR. These *movidas*, in turn, like the programming of Centro and the SLR, were heavily shaped by notions of *conocimiento* and Latinx leadership.

## Theoretical Framework

Our review of the literature on practices and organizational features that bolster Latinx student success highlighted the need to understand supports for, and leadership among, Latinx students in nuanced and distinct ways from student success or leadership broadly defined within the scholarship of higher education. This need is particularly salient at HSIs such as our own, where the ultimate aim should be to liberate students and the institutions themselves through "development of critical consciousness and democratic participation," "advanced academic self-efficacy," and "development of racial/cultural identity," alongside interest in academic progress (García, 2018, p. 137). To this end, our theoretical framework intertwines scholarship on Latinx leadership with the concept of *conocimiento*. Our framework seeks to understand success and leadership development for Latinx students through cultivation of self-awareness and sociopolitical consciousness, as well as students' meaningful participation in the cultivation of their own capabilities and collective social aspirations and mobilization.

### Conceptualizing Latinx Leadership

It is important to conceptualize Latinx leadership as distinct from more color-evasive interpretations and interventions. As observed at our own HSI and within the student success interventions that perpetuated deficit framings of Latinx students as dispositionally or culturally to blame for their academic shortcomings, Suárez (2015) notes that campus leadership programming often marginalizes Latinx students by not accounting for their familial financial obligations, failing to create inviting and affirming spaces for Latinx students within leadership development activities, and providing curriculum and programming rooted in Eurocentric and patriarchal notions of leadership.

In contrast to color-evasive approaches, Bordas (2001) offers early theorizations of Latinx leadership by identifying the centrality of cultural values including collectivist orientations; the importance of mutual trust, respect, and congeniality; and continuous hard work and service toward community-advancing goals with an awareness of historicity. In later work, Bordas (2013) expands on this framework by identifying 10 distinct principles that again coalesce around the importance of self-awareness, mutual relations of trust, expansive and inclusive collaborative networks, community-oriented aspirations and purpose, and finding joy in collective mobilization.

Lozano (2015) builds on this work with a robust synthesis of research on student leadership in higher education, noting particularly the absence of work including Latinx students and a prevalence of color-evasive approaches to leadership development on campuses that often alienated BIPOC students. She combines this review with insights from her empirical work with Latinx undergraduates describing their understandings and experiences of leadership in a Historically White Institution. This analysis provides a framework to understand Latinx students' leadership development as a journey consisting of gaining greater awareness of self and community connections, growing awareness of issues requiring action and of leadership opportunities to address these issues, increasing networks of collaboration within the institution and grounding in networks outside (such as family), and a collective orientation desiring to improve conditions for subsequent generations.

By placing these various works in conversation, we can derive an understanding of Latinx student leadership as a multidimensional and ever-ongoing process. Leaders consistently reflect on their own identities, capabilities, and aspirations. Simultaneously, they build community, identify and learn collaboratively about issues often rooted in conditions of oppression, and strategize and mobilize collectively to overcome challenges and make lasting change. The cyclical and overlapping nature of this conceptualization invites parallels to the theory of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002), which further guides our inquiry.

### *Conocimiento*

*Conocimiento*, though directly translating as "knowledge," encompasses great depth within Chicanx epistemologies. Anzaldúa (2002) defines the term as a "form of spiritual inquiry" in which "you embed your experiences in a larger frame of reference, connecting your personal struggles with those of other beings on the planet, with the struggles of the Earth itself" (p. 119), and as a way to "challenge official and conventional ways of looking at the world, ways set up by those who benefit from such constructions" (p. 120). In other words, *conocimiento* entails courageous and sincere introspection to grasp the breadth of one's experiences, how these have shaped one's perceptions of the world, and how these experiences and perceptions have themselves been shaped by external relations and conditions. *Conocimiento* advances subjective, experiential, and collective knowledge as equally valid to that derived from rationality and empiricism. Within the context of Centro, *conocimiento* guides the ways that faculty and staff seek to know students--understanding them as more than objects of academic support--and the ways students are encouraged to relate to each other.

Just like Lozano's (2015) theorization of Latinx student leadership, Anzaldúa (2002) likewise explains *conocimiento* as a journey. It begins with an *arrebato*, an earthquake, that shakes one from the familiar, the routine, from accepted wisdom, and casts one into *Nepantla*, the second stage in the journey marked by an openness to new understandings and possibilities. The third stage is *Coatlicue*, a phase of despair as one is overwhelmed by the disjuncture between dominant narratives and the new realities of which one has become aware, before entering the fourth stage: a call to action, *el compromiso*. The fifth space (*putting Coyolxauhqui together*, which references

the dismembered moon goddess of Mexica mythology) is one of information gathering and sensemaking as one tackles the realities of which one is newly aware, and in the sixth stage, *the blow up*, one again faces disappointment and turns inward when individual action and expression prove ineffective. In the seventh and final stage, *shifting realities*, one builds mutualistic and humanistic alliances and finally is able to act transformatively through collective effort. Thus, as with the journey of leadership development, students in the process of *conocimiento* experience reflection about themselves and the world around them, identify and challenge conditions of injustice, and ultimately rely on community-oriented approaches to learn and create change. As we examine students' experiences in the SLR, we attend to these processes of growing self-awareness and sociopolitical consciousness as well as building community and envisioning collective action.

## Methods

### Site Context

The institution that houses Centro is a public 4-year, comprehensive university offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in 250 areas of study. The campus serves more than 33,000 students, over 71% of whom identify as students of Color (including 40% Asian, 27% Latinx, and 3% Black students), and 76% of undergraduates received financial aid in 2017-18, with 46% being Pell Grant eligible. The research site is located in a city and region that has been a critical portal of immigration from Mexico and Latin America for generations and is well-known as a hub of Latinx cultural production, activism, and educational justice work.

In this context, the programming of Centro seeks, first and foremost, to establish spaces (virtual and physical) that foster skills and self-efficacy for students to thrive academically and socially where Latinx students can be meaningful participants in their own educational journeys. Centro's ethos draws from extensive scholarship regarding racially minoritized students. Avoidance of deficit perspectives and a focus on students' assets are assured by adherence to the Community Cultural Wealth model (Yosso, 2005), which highlights the ways that students' familial, linguistic, aspirational, social, navigational (knowledge and networks to navigate bureaucratic processes), and resistance (knowledge and experiences combating injustice) resources can be leveraged for their educational success. *Cariño* (Bartolomé, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999) builds on frameworks of pedagogical caring (Noddings, 1988) whereby educators must concern themselves with students' holistic well-being and development rather than exclusively focus on academics but adds the specific ways in which such caring must entail political consciousness that interrogates and opposes racist, nativist, and other oppressive forces. C*onfianza* (Fránquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004) guides the pursuit of "mutual trust" embedded within patterns and expectations of sustained relations within a social network and "expectations of being attentive to and investing emotionally in a variety of such relations" (Vélez-Ibáñez, 1996, p. 165). The concept, originally describing the reliance and solidarity across Mexican and Mexican American households, underlies Centro's efforts to make students' cultures part of the institution's own material culture and to promote a culture of unity, collaboration, and openness wherein

student voice is valued (Fránquiz & del Carmen Salazar, 2004). Finally, of course, Centro also relies on the concept of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002) to nurture students along their journey of awareness, reflection, and development.

The center and its Culturally-Sustaining Mentorship model explicitly focus on bridging Latinx students' academic and ethnic identities, but notably the work of Centro extends to changing the institution and not just the students. To this end, Centro staff and affiliated faculty mobilized to secure support across the campus and, as a result, Centro is now highlighted as part of recruitment, orientation, and welcome days. It provides a signature community learning and study space featuring Latinx student artwork; in-house academic and career advising as well as counseling support; peer mentorship; a faculty fellowship that partners students with faculty for research and mentoring; academic workshops on topics such as academic resilience, graduate school preparation, and time management; identity and leadership development; and community-building events like dinners and study breaks.

In addition, Centro annually organizes and facilitates a 2.5-day Student Leadership Retreat (SLR) with a team intentionally composed of 10-12 Latinx faculty, staff, and student staff. This team works closely with around 50 student participants in their first year at SJSU roughly evenly split between transfer students and first-time undergraduates, to emphasize a shared culturally-grounded understanding of their individual, collective, and historical experiences, along with leadership development and empowerment toward action. The programming challenges deficit-based approaches that students internalize through their K-12 experiences by emphasizing culturally-sustaining relationship building with the aforementioned model of *conocimiento, confianza,* and *cariño* to enhance academic engagement and success.

Taking place off-campus, the SLR provides a mix of structured group activities and discussions, opportunities for individual reflection and meditation, and downtime for studying and hanging out with new friends, organized around seven core workshops (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*SLR Sessions*

| **Session Title** | **Description** |
|---|---|
| *Conocimiento* | *Familias* of six students each engage in an intensive guided exploration of their family backgrounds, ethnic identities, and educational journeys. |
| Latinx Lived Experiences and Educational Pipeline | Students are introduced to the Latinx educational pipeline and historical factors that have shaped it, including critical concepts such as imposter syndrome and subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). |
| Community Cultural Wealth | Facilitators walk students through Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework and help them identify examples from their lives to address current personal, social, or academic challenges at the institution. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Developing Your College Identity | Students learn how to strengthen their student identities by centering their personal commitments, community connections, and capacity-building with peers. |
| Radical Healing | Students reflect on the impacts of systemic violence and inequities experienced by BIPOC and identify ways to heal and protect themselves. |
| Leveraging Strengths through Campus and Academic Engagement | Participants receive an overview of on and off-campus engagement opportunities and how to locate and create spaces that affirm Latinx student experiences. |
| Envisioning Collective Responsibility | Students create vision boards to capture the takeaways that they will convert into concrete actions when they return to campus. |

**Researcher Positionality**

While all members of the research team took part in planning and facilitating the SLR, our positionality vis-à-vis students and the present inquiry vary, as do our roles at the institution. Poza is a Cuban American cis-hetero male serving as an assistant professor at the time of this inquiry. With relative class, gender, citizenship, and educational privilege, he envisions his role with Centro (as affiliated faculty providing regular office hours and leading occasional workshops) and in the SLR as heavily dependent on listening to students to better understand their experiences, concerns, and questions. As a scholar of language ideologies in educational policy and practice, Poza approached this inquiry with a focus on the interactional ways in which structural oppression is perpetuated or challenged. Pinedo Gangai was raised in a traditional Mexican Catholic household, where the Spanish language was exclusively used to communicate with family members. She was the first in her family to attend, navigate, and graduate from an institution of higher education in the U.S. and has assumed various staff positions within student and academic affairs in the last 15 years. As the director of Centro, Pinedo Gangai's racialized and cultural experiences as a Latina have shaped her strength-based approach to developing programs and services that holistically support Latinx students. Barrera, the granddaughter of Mexican immigrants, was the first in her family to attend college, but as someone who attended an elite institution on a full scholarship, she had the privilege of focusing solely on academics without the work and family obligations that many Latinx students balance. Embracing the idea of "be the professor whom you needed," Barrera draws upon her memories of confronting the unspoken customs of higher education to create interactive workshops that make transparent and disrupt those assumptions for Centro students. Burciaga identifies as a Chicana whose parents were the first in their families to attend college. Burciaga grew up on the Stanford University campus where her parents modeled high-impact practices to support first-generation college students. She holds a joint appointment in Educational Leadership and Chicana and Chicano Studies. Pizarro is a Chicano first-generation college student who has taught in Chicanx Studies for many years, helped create and develop Centro and the SLR, and has been actively supporting Latinx student engagement and success at the university for more than two decades. He has also conducted research with student researchers in the SLR to

understand the experiences and needs of Latinx students on campus and the unique strengths they bring to the Centro and the university. This diverse array of experiences and roles shaped the ways in which we individually and collectively could connect with students, make demands of administrators, and interpret our observations.

***Movidas and Centro***

Having reviewed the institutional context including Centro and the SLR, we describe the *movidas* that brought about Centro and the SLR in the first place, since this too plays an important role in examining our positionality. Description of the *movidas* certain members of the research team undertook to shift institutional culture and resources demonstrate our involvement and investment in Centro's activities and success that must be acknowledged as we consider its effectiveness in serving students. Analysis of our reflections upon experiences and efforts as Centro director (Pinedo Gangai), senior faculty (Barrera and Burciaga) and administrators involved with the task force and Centro (Pizarro), and junior faculty newly engaged with Centro (Poza), shed light on three pivotal *movidas* that supported and sustained Centro's mission and vision.

The first major *movida*, undertaken by Pinedo Gangai, combines expansion of professional roles, the building of strategic relationships, and fostering asset orientations about students. Institutional compartmentalization often leaves little room for faculty, staff, and student engagement beyond the day-to-day roles and responsibilities, hindering challenges to existing practices and policies that impact Latinx student success in isolation from a critical community. One way Pinedo Gangai approached this challenge was by setting aside personal time to engage with the Chicanx/Latinx Task Force working towards campus-wide coordination to support Latinx students. This asset-based approach to supporting Latinx students countered the frustration Pinedo Gangai felt towards deficit-based approaches and punitive advising practices, including checks and holds on students' progress. The collaborative approach sought to validate students' individual and collective cultural, historical, and academic lived experiences and affirm their academic abilities. Pinedo Gangai began implementing such practices in her advising and was eventually hired as the Centro Director, where she continued the task force's momentum by making it a priority to strengthen campus partnerships and develop new cross-departmental collaborations in support of Latinx student success. This *movida* consisted of a sustained approach to community building in otherwise siloed institutions. These efforts were instrumental in helping identify like-minded colleagues willing to do the "extra" work.

Recognizing that the ability to understand and navigate the institution's political landscape is critical, Pinedo Gangai also undertook the second major *movida* of influencing people and policies vertically and horizontally through healthy working relationships with key campus leaders as part of strategic planning. During Pinedo Gangai's first month directing Centro, she met with the interim Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) to create a personal and professional connection through discussing departmental goals and areas of alignment. The VPSA was receptive to meeting regularly to ensure she felt supported during her transition. As the workload

grew exponentially, Pinedo Gangai quickly realized that Centro lacked the necessary staff and permanent base funding to support its ongoing work. Drawing upon the recommendations from the task force's external review, she submitted a memo directly to the VPSA requesting an additional FTE position in the midst of university budget discussions. To amplify this request, Pinedo Gangai reached out to the former Co-Chair of the Task Force for support. This *movida*, combining role expansion with strategic relationships, embodies advocacy further described by Pizarro.

Pizarro found it critical to the success of the task force and later Centro that decision-making administrators were challenged to re-think conventional approaches to supporting Latinx students. A key facet of this approach to engage administrators was to constantly highlight the research and complex conceptual framework that informed Centro's model. Administrators, even when supportive of efforts like Centro's, rarely understand the research on Latinx student engagement, and thus, in conversations, meetings, and at events with these administrators, Pizarro always referenced: 1) the research that demonstrated the negative effects of deficit thinking on Latinx students as well as the ways that deficit thinking was present on our campus, 2) the necessity of an assets-orientation and the specific ways we were using Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model, and 3) the data we were obtaining on the positive impacts of this approach for Latinx students, along with specific students' examples of these successes on our campus.

As a full professor, department chair, and someone who had served on high-level university committees, Pizarro had relationships and a sense of trust with administrators that facilitated the success of this *movida*, even in challenging circumstances. In one instance, a new senior-level administrator came to one of Centro's large community events and emphasized a "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" message to a ballroom full of Latinx students. After this messaging, Pizarro requested to break from the planned program so that he could intervene right after this administrator presented. Pizarro then explained the Community Cultural Wealth model, provided examples that aligned with students' experiences, and centered the power of Latinx students and communities that they could build on for success in the university.

This *movida* challenged administrators to learn more about the work, but also provided them with concrete examples that they would later share with others on campus. Through that deeper understanding, these administrators became stronger allies and requests for additional resources were better received.

A final salient *movida* once more involved role expansion and strategic relationships. At the focal institution, one of the top reasons Latinx students leave is because of difficult encounters with academic advisors. Due to high student-to-advisor ratios, many advisors must adopt a more transactional approach; in addition, they rarely receive release time for community engagement. Although an external review recommended the assignment of a single academic advisor, Pinedo Gangai drew upon relationships cultivated with advisors whom she knew to care deeply about the relational elements of their work and recruited one from each college in order to extend advising at the center. This *movida* challenges conventional ways of assigning academic advising and faculty fellowship roles. Barrera was recruited as one such adviser, noting that while challenged

to meaningfully connect with students among other demands on her time, reimagining the ways that research, teaching, and service operated within the institution helped advance professional goals while also bolstering her ability as a mentor. Through regular office hours at Centro and by using Centro as a space in which to work on her own scholarship, she connected with students through spontaneous conversations and by letting them see her grapple with the writing process as well. Over time, these choices led her to develop a professional narrative that enabled others to see how engagement with the Latinx community both reflected institutional efforts to increase retention and graduation rates and enhanced her ability to mentor other colleagues in this work and facilitate more meaningful attachment to campus. This bridging of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs has helped Latinx students feel a greater sense of belonging, increasing campus involvement and academic engagement.

Taken together, these *movidas* speak to the ways individuals can shift institutional norms and practices through strategic, collaborative, and, at times, subversive agency. Expanding professional roles, forming relationships across departments, and leveraging these to bypass conventional chains of command, and foregrounding asset orientations about students guided significant shifts in resource allocation and programming at our institution. The student leadership retreat most clearly epitomizes these shifts, which we show after describing our methods of data collection and analysis.

**Data Collection**

Our inquiry operated within the mold of a qualitative case study, requiring "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 21). Drawing from ethnographic, historiographic, and sociological methods, case study research may describe, interpret, or evaluate the case under examination, whether an individual, process, or institution (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2018). Given that our research questions sought, first, to capture students' experiences within Centro programming and particularly the SLR, and second, to interpret those experiences through the lenses of leadership development and *conocimiento*, we collected first-hand student report data for this case study through surveys (Qualtrics questionnaires with open-ended questions administered before and after the SLR to all participants) and, most importantly, from a large group conversation among 36 SLR participants available for a reflective gathering several weeks after returning to campus (of 47 that participated in the retreat). Of the 36 students in the reflective conversation, 16 were transfer students and 20 were first-year undergraduates, with 21 female-identifying students, 10 male-identifying students, and five identifying as non-binary or not indicating a gender identity. All participants identified as Latinx albeit using a variety of terms ("Hispanic," "Mexican," "Mexican American," "Chicana" or "Chicanx," and "Latina"). As such, the group was closely representative of the larger group that attended the retreat overall. Moreover, since all retreat participants completed post-retreat surveys, it is fair to assume that scheduling was the primary reason for not attending the reflective conversation. We frame this conversation through the Chicanx epistemo-methodologies of *testimonio* and *pláticas*.

We foreground these approaches because they center the experiences and collective sense-making of BIPOC students (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Pizarro et al., 2018). *Testimonios*, echoing counterstories as a method from Critical Race Theory, allow non-majoritarian perspectives and experiential knowledge to serve as central systems of knowing and sources of strength in hostile environments. Students' responses to the surveys served as written *testimonios* in which they grappled with questions that prompted reflection of how they identified themselves, how they defined success and leadership, and how they envisioned contributing to the greater campus community both before and after attending the retreat. Students' responses to these questions were conversational in tone, with notable sincerity and vulnerability and spanning one or two paragraphs per question. The added layer of a group conversation allowed counterstories to interweave as *pláticas*, conversations that "allow us to witness shared memories, experiences, stories, ambiguities, and interpretations that impart with us a knowledge connected to personal, familial, and cultural history" (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016, p. 99). *Pláticas*, unlike individual *testimonios*, include elements of negotiation, dialogic interpretation, and instantaneous theorization to "make sense of the historical and theoretical foundations and complexities...by merging our personal experiences to them" (Ibid, p. 99).

Framing these *pláticas* were questions about students' overall experiences and learning at the retreat, their perspectives on leadership and how they had developed as leaders, as well as how they planned to follow through on their learning after the retreat, including what challenges they foresaw or were already encountering. The SLR facilitators participated in the *pláticas* and occasionally answered questions from their own positionalities, but mainly focused on creating a space where students were able to share anything and everything that reflected their experiences in the SLR and the impact it had on them over the weeks.

**Data Analysis**

Recordings of the SLR *pláticas* were transcribed using Otter AI voice recognition and then finalized manually by the research team. While transcription was verbatim, responses are represented herein with repetitions or verbalized pauses ("like", "um") that occur in natural conversation reduced for clarity. Responses to the qualitative surveys and the conversation transcripts were reviewed by each individual on the research team with deductive and inductive approaches. Pursuant to our first research question, which asked what students' experiences were in Centro programming and especially the SLR, we began with descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2009) to identify information within student responses that characterized their actions, thoughts, emotions, and learning during the SLR. To address our second research question, which asked how frameworks of Latinx leadership and *conocimiento* could help interpret students' experiences, we proceeded with structural coding (Saldaña, 2009) and captured student commentary linked to the concepts in our theoretical framework either explicitly or implicitly. As such, we specifically identified elements of Latinx leadership and *conocimiento* such as self-awareness, sociopolitical consciousness, building community, and transformative action. The research team then jointly reviewed the codes at which we had arrived, consolidating in cases of overlap, and negotiating in

cases of disagreement, until arriving at a place of reliability. From our codes, we identified a trajectory that students' *pláticas* revealed, encapsulated in four sequential questions. These questions and their related concepts and codes are captured in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Coding Scheme for Survey Testimonios and Transcribed Pláticas*

| **Descriptive Codes (Inductive)** | **Structural Codes (Deductive – Facets of *Conocimiento* and Latinx Leadership)** | **Emergent Categories (Questions in the Journey)** |
|---|---|---|
| ● Introspection<br>● Feeling seen/Belonging | ● *Conocimiento*: *Nepantla*<br>● Self-awareness (Suárez, 2015) | Who am I? |
| ● Shared experiences<br>● Internalized deficit perspectives<br>● Awareness of systemic inequities | ● *Conocimiento: Coatlicue*<br>● Sociopolitical consciousness (Suárez, 2015)<br>● Building community (Lozano, 2015) | How have I/we been shaped? |
| ● Embracing ethnic identity<br>● Connection with peers and faculty<br>● Transition from anxiety to calm/Academic confidence | ● *Conocimiento: El compromiso*, assembling *Coyolxauhqui*<br>● Collective identity and strategizing (Lozano, 2015) | What strengths do I/we have? |
| ● Improved feelings toward institution<br>● Uplifting peers<br>● Reclaiming voice to enact change<br>● Sense of ownership | ● *Conocimiento*: Shifting realities<br>● Transformative legacy (Lozano, 2015) | What can I/we do now/next? |

**Limitations**

The present work is not without its shortcomings. While qualitative surveys provide some form of written *testimonio*, there is no questioning that an oral interview process would likely yield richer and more descriptive accounts of students' experiences before and after the SLR. Likewise,

holding the *plática* as a single, large group debrief no doubt allowed some participants to avoid speaking at length, whereas smaller focus groups could have fostered more dialogic and in-depth conversations. From the perspective of institutional administrators seeking specifically causal relationships to student success, a more longitudinal period of observation, as well as comparison to comparable peers not afforded by the experiences of the SLR, would also bolster the analysis.

## Findings and Analysis: "We Can Use Our Voice"

Analyzing students' discussions of their experiences with Centro, particularly the leadership retreat, revealed a trajectory of personal growth and collective coming together. As we noted in Table 2, this path could be characterized with four overarching themes aligned to central concepts in students' responses: introspection and knowledge of self, understanding of self within systems of power and social relationships, shifting from deficit to asset orientations of self and community, and leadership as the capacity for transformative collective action. We present our findings aligned to those themes and intertwined with analysis consistent with Anzaldúa's development of *conocimiento,* in which the journey and the subjective sense-making are interwoven with chronological events and descriptions.

### Who Am I?

In Anzaldúa's (2002) framework of *conocimiento* with seven co-occurring and cyclical stages, there is a seismic shift in one's understanding of self wherein "an emotional bottom falls out from under you, forcing you to confront your fear of others breaching the emotional walls you've built around yourself" (p. 122). Students repeatedly invoked this shift for themselves as they reflected on the retreat. Observations noted first and foremost the novelty of extensive dedicated introspection, with one student appreciating "having to actually think about who I actually am as a person and that there is a lot to me" and another expressing gratitude that it "gave me the space to reflect on the things that define me."

This focus on introspection stirs uncertainty and ambiguity. Poignantly, one student commented:

> I really learned a lot of real-life things that I took into myself, the people I surround myself with every day, my career...like a lot of self-reflection...So, coming back from the retreat, the main thing that I still think about all the time is, Am I really doing this for myself?

Similarly, another student offered, "It just makes me think a lot more. Well, what am I? What am I doing every day?" This stage of ambiguity and uncertainty, which Anzaldúa dubs *Nepantla*, is a "liminal, transitional space...split between before and after" (p. 122). Unsurprisingly, this process of deeper knowing also elicits feelings of self-judgment or regret, as one student articulated, "[W]hy did I do that before? Why did I close myself off to that option, to seek help?"

The outcome of this exploration is a sense of being seen and belonging. One student described how "[i]t was nice to be seen for who you really are in some way." The opportunity to

reveal a true self establishes the foundation for belonging: “It gave me relief in the sense that I don’t feel so alone anymore, that there are many people with similar struggles,” one student explained, while another expressed, “I also realized that I am not the only student experiencing struggles in college...it helped me feel a sense of belonging.” Of course, reflection upon oneself quickly invites reflection on one’s formative experiences, relationships, and sociopolitical contexts in order to understand why some of these internal conflicts emerge.

***How Have I/We Been Shaped?***

Anzaldúa’s (2002) framework of *conocimiento* also includes scrutiny of “dominant and ethnic ideologies and the mind-sets their cultures induce in others” (p. 123) alongside questioning one’s place in broader social systems. Indeed, one student connected deeper knowledge of self to a greater understanding of white supremacy and systemic inequities, saying, “knowing my history made me feel included.” Undaunted by this historical rootedness, another student proclaimed, “We must also be aware that the system is not built for us and we must find ways of resistance through education.” This particular statement is both hopeful and critical, noting how education itself can be emancipatory and empowering, even if the educational institution is part of a web of systemic oppression.

Of course, such journeys to self-awareness and resistance of oppression require *confianza* and mutual trust, which students also highlighted. Students repeatedly accentuated feelings of empathy and understanding that they both felt and extended to others, such as one respondent who contributed, “I was able to truly communicate who I am as an individual,” and another who described a deep bond with her retreat *familia* by saying, “Having a *familia* and being able to connect with others that have a similar pathway as you has been very helpful and calming. My *familia* members have been there to console me during any obstacle.” In a particularly evocative moment, one young woman said to another:

> I hope you know that you had a really big impact on my life...we just started getting into this really in-depth conversation about struggles that we all were going through and like struggles that we saw in the world and...that was so inspiring because it was why we care about the same things...but having these situations, like the retreat that sparked these conversations, and these conversations into relationships and just things that you carry out in life, and it was a very special moment.

As the student’s expression of gratitude demonstrates, mutual trust helped unearth shared experiences and notably, shared struggles “in the world,” that is, extending far beyond their experiences on campus and in line with Anzaldúa’s framework of knowing the self within larger systems and histories.

Frequently mentioned in these struggles were internalized deficit perspectives and the weight of systemic oppression that manifested as feelings of inadequacy and anger, albeit sometimes yielding to hope. One student shared about her initial self-doubt saying, “I remember sitting in my Bio-Statistics class, and I was like, oh, there's no way. All these kids are one up on me, what am I doing? And I just felt this moment of just being small.” Similarly, another student

shared, “These historical issues have impacted me in a way that in class I know the answer, but I don’t raise my hand. There are multiple students that raise their hand all the time and I feel like maybe my ideas are undervalued for not speaking up.” Grappling with the language of race, another student chimed in, “I always feel less smart than my peers due to my stereotype of my race. I try even harder to participate and work harder than my peers that are not my race to give a better view and contrasting stereotype.” It bears noting that the awkward phrasing here underscores how, for many students, the SLR is the first opportunity they have had to academically engage with the language and history of race. Echoing this turn away from deficit orientations, another student recollected, “I never spoke Spanish. I [used] to separate my academic life and home life. I felt that they had nothing to do with each other, but my family values actually help me.”

These latter quotes evidence not only awareness of systemic oppression, but also recognition of the assets that minoritized students bring with them that can foment individual success and broader transformation. Anzaldúa holds this growing awareness as the seventh stage of transformative *conocimiento* wherein one develops “holistic alliances” and an ability to “transform conflict into an opportunity to resolve an issue, to change negativities into strengths, and to heal the traumas of racism and other systemic *desconocimientos* [ignorance, self-destructive tendencies, limitations of imagination or spirit]” (p. 154). Correspondingly, students also affirmed their awareness of personal and collective strengths brought to their attention and eventually expressed commitments to put to use toward transformative ends.

***What Strengths Do I/We Have?***

Centro’s specific focus on asset orientations resonated with students, as several expressed increased self-assurances linked to pride in their ethnic and bicultural identities. One student, for instance, situated his newfound sense of belonging as stemming from embracing his biculturalism: “I felt like I wasn't Mexican enough to be Mexican and not American enough to be American. Relating to others on this level makes me want to embrace my culture. I can now say that I am truly happy about my background.” Comparably, another student reflected on the retreat workshop about Community Cultural Wealth and opined, “It really made me realize that I shouldn’t be afraid to be who I am and made me proud of where I come from.” Another student, one of the few Latinx students in his major, shared his growing self-respect and self-efficacy recounting his interaction with a professor shortly after the retreat:

> I reached out to one that I'm really intimidated by just because it's like [a] super successful guy...What am I going to talk to him about? We’re like polar opposites. He's like super white and I’m Brown. But being, I guess I just kind of went for it...Because I realized that one, I really do want to connect with him just because I feel like it's an opportunity that I've never given myself. But it's also that, well, I'm here and I'm studying this major, and I'm part of this. And, yes, you know, we might be different in certain areas, but I think there's some commonalities. So, I definitely felt like that changed after I came back. I'm like, I'm still working through that. You know, it's weird to be Latino in that, but it's okay. And it might feel awkward. But

> I definitely do agree that having that insight and now it's really cool because I feel like there has been a shifting...

The act in itself, speaking to one's professor, seems minor, but the student's affirmation that "I'm part of this" makes a twofold claim. Along with the recognition of commonalities with the "super successful" professor despite a racial difference, the claim is one of shared humanity and one of entitlement to equal opportunities for meaningful participation in his learning. Such recognition of belonging comprises the final theme in students' trajectories of leadership development.

***What Can I/We Do Now/Next?***

Closely linked to a shift in seeing themselves and their communities through asset orientations were desires to apply those strengths toward transforming the institution and the broader society. Shifting to a focus on strengths constitutes a reclaiming of voice both to create narratives for oneself rather than having them socially imposed and to speak with and for others in ways that allow their own power to emerge. Succinctly, one student shared a growing appreciation for collective notions of success and propagated this reclamation of voice by defining the leadership she aspired to as "you empower others, and if you make others leaders, and that makes you yourself a leader." Students also acknowledged the vulnerability in stepping forward to become a campus leader; one participant explained, "Representation matters, and I can be vocal about that, even if it makes me feel uncomfortable." Another student provided a concrete example, recounting an experience of studying with friends shortly after the retreat:

> So, after the retreat I met up with some of my friends from class and the three of us are English majors. And they were like super nervous about finals and everything and…[W]e spent like a whole hour talking about, just like the struggles of being like a Latina English major. And I felt like some of the stuff that I learned at the retreat, I kind of like, remembered it and passed it on to them and just reminded them, hey, you know, this...doesn't define who you are, you know, and I just tried to motivate them and make them feel like they're, you know, they're worth more... I think that's when I noticed like I felt really good that I helped them out and they even told me like, 'Oh my gosh, thank you so much, we feel so much better now.' And I think that I learned some stuff at the retreat, and like it showed in those ways by also reaching out and passing it on to other students.

In this quote, we can see that the student is still in an early stage of this journey as she hedges her claim ("I *kind of* like, remembered it" and later, "I *think* that I learned *some stuff* at the retreat"), even as she passes her learning on to other students.

While these students focused on their capacity to lead on the university campus by using their voices to encourage others to share their own, another student drew specifically from his interest in public health as a major and eventual career, recounting his advocacy for more multiculturally cognizant public health research during one of his classes after the retreat:

> And then I was like, 'Well, what about my community?'...and I brought it into HIV infection rates in the Latinx community. And it just kind of was baffling me that our white counterparts, their rates for HIV was constantly getting lower where our rates as our community was also getting higher and higher and higher. And also to like my professor, she researches colon cancer and in my own community, specifically, and it's kind of like, taboo to talk about it…[She] was like, 'We just don't have the data,' and I like I got kind of offended like, 'why are we not worthy enough to be researched?'...I got really upset that our community and our rates are not going down when it could be and just the fact that we don't, we're not given the proper education. It made me angry. And it's, I want to start researching.

This exhortation for community-specific medical data and public health education demonstrates a reclaiming of voice to assert belonging and entitlement to meaningful participation as a student in the present and researcher in the future. It marks, as do the previous examples, an understanding of leadership that is in service to others and subverts oppressive systems that fracture those connections. Another student's reflections on the retreat workshops offer a concise yet moving summary: "They helped me better understand why some of the problems in our communities persist to be problems, and how we can *use our voice* to speak out against such inequities," (emphasis added).

We chose to highlight this particular utterance, "we can use our voice," to title the findings and discussion section because it encapsulates the ethos and arc behind our own *movidas* and students' experiences with Centro. Our voices, speaking for the research team and students alike, enable our deeper knowledge of self as individuals and as collectives through sharing and dialogue. Our voices help us reclaim the historical narrative and political power by contextualizing and articulating our conditions within systems of oppression and liberation. By asserting our claims of dignity, equality, and value within the educational process, our voices help enact this liberation.

## Discussion

The reclaiming and purposeful direction of voice is no small feat. While certainly no formal proscriptions silenced students prior to their involvement with Centro, their contributions during the retreat *pláticas* attest to socially enforced silencing as a result of individualistic and competitive white supremacist modes of organizing higher education, manifested as internalized deficit perspectives and lack of belonging. However, the findings regarding our first research question speak to the ways that students' Centro and SLR experiences nurtured and amplified *conocimiento, confianza,* and *cariño*. These, in turn, provided students with deeper knowledge of self and society as well as a supportive community in which to share their challenges and recognize their individual and collective strengths consistent with both the frameworks of Latinx leadership development (Lozano, 2015) and *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2002). The resulting transformations that students articulated of consciousness and of behaviors suggest that meaningful participation in Centro contexts spurred movement toward meaningful participation elsewhere in students' academic and personal lives.

The assertion of students' voices--in defining themselves, critiquing oppressive structures and histories, and demanding more inclusive educational experiences--reveals an affirmation of their leadership capability through the creation of contexts that enable their meaningful participation in their educational journeys. The recountings of students exerting agency in contexts removed from the leadership retreat such as classrooms and faculty office hours further speak to the lasting effects of these engagements with *conocimiento* and leadership development.

Several additional lessons can be learned from students' experiences vis-à-vis the specific *movidas* and contexts that provided the affordances for such occurrences. The SLR would not have been possible without the contributions of participating faculty, staff, and students, as well as institutional support. Critical to obtaining the latter was the collection and strategic deployment of Latinx student data. Information on retention and graduation rates for Latinx students and any existing equity gaps can be utilized to inform strategic interventions. Sharing this information with high-level leadership can usefully influence the reassignment or expansion of staff/faculty roles to maintain, analyze, and act upon data. Likewise, institutions seeking to develop holistic support for Latinx students should tap into staff and faculty who can serve as liaisons to key support services and academic departments. Far from viewing their role as an institutional responsibility, individuals within this talent pool approach their work through the lens of a core personal commitment. As a result, they invest in an integrated, proactive, and personalized delivery of student services that are culturally resonant.

## Conclusion

Our examination of the organizational shifts that institutionalized Centro and the interpersonal shifts that students experienced on the leadership retreat provides insight into the systems and practices that elucidate Latinx students' leadership capability and humanity as denizens of the university. Programmatically, spaces both psycho-emotional and physical must be created in which students can reflect deeply on their motivations, experiences, and challenges both as individuals and as members of shared identities, including challenging patterns of oppression. Further, students must be given a legitimate and meaningful voice in their educational trajectories, which we contend based on observations and extensive prior literature, is supported by affirming their experiences and identities within the curriculum and institutional culture. We revisit Gutiérrez and colleagues' (2009) distinction between focuses on "remediation" and those on "re-mediation:"

> [R]e-mediating a history of inferior education required reframing what counts as education generally and literacy specifically and redesigning new curricula that created new linguistic and cognitive demands through an historicizing education and its transformative potential...where the overarching goal was to reframe education so that students could begin to reconceive their identities as learners and historical actors in the academy and beyond. (p. 15)

We believe that the efforts of staff, faculty, and students within Centro's programming, particularly the SLR, provide precisely this shift, rejecting pathologizing approaches to explain

academic disparities and instead cultivating Latinx student leadership as collaborative, transformational agents within and beyond the institution.

We have characterized these efforts as *movidas* insofar as these were grassroots and often subversive actions undertaken with intent not to palliate conditions but to fundamentally alter them. In the case of this particular HSI, these shifts required collaboration, role expansion, and advocacy to garner support and resources from the highest levels, or to make do without these benefits. Individual faculty and staff can only support students so far without resources and vocal endorsement from the institution as a whole. In turn, institutional proclamations and allocations cannot meet their stated ends if individuals are not willing to engage students with respect, humility, and sincere dialogic intention.

In practice, this interdependence has translated to two notable dilemmas. First, it has meant that the individuals who are already active in Centro (both students and faculty/staff) have been asked to play increasingly large and visible roles within the institution, marking dramatic increases in responsibility and obligation, but without commensurate support or remuneration. This mirrors the documented pattern of BIPOC and other minoritized faculty performing disproportionate and "invisible" service that is less recognized in processes of retention and promotion (SSFNRIG, 2017). Thus, while individuals like those at Centro accept these additional roles out of a commitment to students and in recognition of their capacity for good, they do so at a risk to the sustainability of their career and well-being. The second concern that emerges from this work is that as Centro has grown in recognition across the campus, its rhetoric has been adopted at higher administrative levels and across academic departments, although not always with corresponding knowledge, skills, and ideological commitments. It is one thing to proclaim support for Latinx students and to sincerely wish for their success, but another to explicitly confront systemic oppression, invite students' identities and experiences into the curriculum, and build from students' strengths.

We hope this work elucidates pathways for others to enact *movidas,* enabling students to become more meaningful participants in the narratives about themselves and their educational journeys. Further, as students' stories attest to the widespread and institutionalized nature of deficit perspectives and other marginalizing forces in higher education, we seek to push this movement from surreptitious *movidas* to widespread institutional action. The inherent dignity of our students warrants nothing less. At the moment of this writing, mass mobilizations across the U.S. protested racist police violence and systemic racism across political, economic, educational, and medical domains. Organizers and community leaders serve as bulwarks of resistance against white supremacy and anti-democratic forces such as the mob that stormed the U.S. Capitol in early January 2021. Youth spearhead much of this justice work, and we believe this moment is ripe for the enactment of these shifts that honor and open space for students' voices.

**Notes**

[1] *Latinx* refers to those of Latin American descent and is intended to represent the intersectional nature of language, race, ethnicity, and gender identity, notably by eschewing a binary notion of

gender from previous labels *Latina/o* and *Latin@*. For a review of the term's evolution, see Salinas, Jr. and Lozano (2019).

[2] While the literature in Critical Race Theory and its applications uses the term "colorblind" (e.g.: Gotanda, 1991), we use the term "color-evasive" to avoid the ableist trappings of the original term (Annamma et al., 2017).

[3] HSI, a federal designation for tertiary institutions with at least 25% full-time Latinx undergraduate enrollment

[4] We use the term BIPOC to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous peoples within the broader community of people of Color in this case, noting that they have disproportionately experienced symbolic and physical violence through existing systems of oppression (Grady, 2020). We use "of Color" when addressing general demographics or situations that do not involve students identifying as Black or Indigenous.

[5] EOP is a comprehensive advising and counseling services for students from historically minoritized groups

## REFERENCES

Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *20*(2), 147-162. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248837

Anzaldúa, G. (2002). Now let us shift...conocimiento…the path of inner work, public acts. In G. Anzaldúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation* (pp. 117-159). Routledge.

Bartolomé, L. I. (2008). Authentic cariño and respect in minority education: The political and ideological dimensions of love. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, *1*(1), 1-17.

Beatty, C. (2015). Latin@ student organizations as pathways to leadership development. In A. Lozano (Ed.), *Latina/o college student leadership: Emerging theory, promising practice* (pp. 45-64).

Bordas, J. (2001). Latino leadership: Building a humanistic and diverse society. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *8*(2), 112-134. https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190100800208

Bordas, J. (2013). *The power of Latino leadership: Culture, inclusion, and contribution*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Castro, E. L., & Cortez, E. (2017). Exploring the lived experiences and intersectionalities of Mexican community college transfer students: Qualitative insights toward expanding a transfer receptive culture. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *41*(2), 77-92. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2016.1158672

Cook, A., Pérusse, R., & Rojas, E. D. (2012). Increasing academic achievement and college-going rates for Latina/o English language learners: A survey of school counselor interventions. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, *4*(2), 24-40. https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/jcps/vol4/iss2/2/

Cotera, M., Blackwell, M., & Espinoza, D. (2018). Introduction: Movements, movimientos, and movidas. In D. Espinoza & M. Blackwell (Eds.), *Chicana movidas: New narratives of activism and feminism in the movement era* (pp. 1-30). University of Texas Press.

Crisp, G., & Nora, A. (2010). Hispanic student success: Factors influencing the persistence and transfer decisions of Latino community college students enrolled in developmental education. *Research in Higher Education*, *51*(2), 175-194. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9151-x

Crisp, G., & Nuñez, A. M. (2014). Understanding the racial transfer gap: Modeling underrepresented minority and nonminority students' pathways from two-to four-year institutions. *The Review of Higher Education*, *37*(3), 291-320. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2014.0017

Crisp, G., Taggart, A., & Nora, A. (2015). Undergraduate Latina/o students: A systematic review of research identifying factors contributing to academic success outcomes. Review of Educational Research, 85(2), 249-274. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654314551064

de Brey, C., Musu, L., McFarland, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti, M., Zhang, A., Branstetter, C., & Wang, X. (2019). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2018*. NCES 2019-038. National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019038.pdf

Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative inquiry*, *8*(1), 105-126.

Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona, J. (2012). Chicana/Latina testimonios: Mapping the methodological, pedagogical, and political. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *45*(3), 363-372. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698149

Fierros, C. O., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2016). Vamos a platicar: The contours of pláticas as Chicana/Latina feminist methodology. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, *15*(2), 98-121.

Flink, P. J. (2018). Latinos and higher education: A literature review. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *17*(4), 402-414. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717705701

Fránquiz, M. E., & del Carmen Salazar, M. (2004). The transformative potential of humanizing pedagogy: Addressing the diverse needs of Chicano/Mexicano students. *The High School Journal*, *87*(4), 36-53.

Gándara, P. C., & Contreras, F. (2009). The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies. Harvard University Press.

Gándara, P. C., Alvarado, E., Driscoll, A., & Orfield, G. (2012). Building pathways to transfer: Community colleges that break the chain of failure for students of color. *The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto de Derechos Civiles*. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED529493.pdf

García, G. A., & Okhidoi, O. (2015). Culturally relevant practices that "serve" students at a Hispanic serving institution. *Innovative Higher Education*, 40(4), 345-357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-015-9318-7

García, G. A. (2018). Decolonizing Hispanic-serving institutions: A framework for organizing. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *17*(2), 132-147. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717734289

García, G. A., & Dwyer, B. (2018). Exploring college students' identification with an organizational identity for serving Latinx students at a Hispanic serving institution (HSI) and an emerging HSI. *American Journal of Education*, *124*(2), 191-215. https://doi.org/10.1086/695609

García, G. A., & Ramirez, J. J. (2018). Institutional agents at a Hispanic serving institution: Using social capital to empower students. *Urban Education*, 53(3), 355-381. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915623341

García, G. A., Núñez, A. M., & Sansone, V. A. (2019). Toward a multidimensional conceptual framework for understanding "servingness" in Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A synthesis of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 89*(5), 745-784. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319864591

Gotanda, N. (1991). A Critique of "Our Constitution is Color-Blind." *Stanford Law Review, 44*(1), 1-68.

Grady, C. (2020, June 30). *Why the term "BIPOC" is so complicated, explained by linguists*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2020/6/30/21300294/bipoc-what-does-it-mean-critical-race-linguistics-jonathan-rosa-deandra-miles-hercules

Guardia, J. (2015). Leadership and identity. In A. Lozano (Ed.), *Latina/o college student leadership: Emerging theory, promising practice* (pp. 65-83). Lexington Books.

Gutiérrez, K. D., Hunter, J. D., & Arzubiaga, A. (2009). Re-mediating the university: Learning through sociocritical literacies. *Pedagogies: An International Journal, 4*(1), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800802557037

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*(1), 342–345.

Lozano, A. (2015). Re-Imagining Latina/o student success at a historically white instituion. In A. Lozano (Ed.), *Latina/o college student leadership: Emerging theory, promising practice* (pp. 3-28). Lexington Books.

Mariscal, J., Marquez Kiyama, J., & Navarro Benavides, V. (2019). The embodiment and enactment of funds of knowledge among Latina/o university outreach staff. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2019.1653299

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. Jossey-Bass.

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543534

Noddings, N. (1988). An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. *American Journal of Education, 96*(2), 215-230. https://doi.org/10.1086/443894

Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher, 41*(3), 93-97. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12441244

Pizarro, M., Nkosi, J., & Ríos-Cervantes, A. (2019). Developing Chicanx Studies methods: Living racial justice with teachers, communities, and students. In N. Deeb-Sosa (Ed.), *Community-based participatory research: Testimonios from Chicana/o Studies* (pp. 43-69). University of Arizona Press.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Salinas, Jr., C. (2015). Latino/a leadership retreats. In A. Lozano (Ed.), *Latina/o college student leadership: Emerging theory, promising practice* (pp. 101-122). Lexington Books.

Salinas, Jr., C., & Lozano, A. (2019). Mapping and recontextualizing the evolution of the term Latinx: An environmental scanning in higher education. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 18*(4), 302-315. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1390464

Santiago, D. A. (2012). Public policy and Hispanic-serving institutions: From invention to accountability. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 11*(3), 163-167. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2012.686367

Social Sciences Feminist Network Research Interest Group. (2017). The burden of invisible work

in academia: Social inequalities and time use in five university departments. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, *39*, 228-245.

Sólorzano, D. G., Villalpando, O., & Oseguera, L. (2005). Educational inequities and Latina/o undergraduate students in the United States: A critical race analysis of their educational progress. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *4*(3), 272-294. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192705276550

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2011). A social capital framework for the study of institutional agents and their role in the empowerment of low-status students and youth. *Youth & Society, 43*, 1066-1109. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X10382877

Suárez, C. E. (2015). Never created with nosotros in mind. In A. Lozano (Ed.), *Latina/o college student leadership: Emerging theory, promising practice* (pp. 29-44). Lexington Books.

Tello, A. M., & Lonn, M. R. (2017). The role of high school and college counselors in supporting the psychosocial and emotional needs of Latinx first-generation college students. *Professional Counselor*, *7*(4), 349-359. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1164907.pdf

Tovar, E. (2015). The role of faculty, counselors, and support programs on Latino/a community college students' success and intent to persist. *Community College Review*, *43*(1), 46-71. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0091552114553788

Valencia, R. R. (2012). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Routledge.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. State University of New York Press.

Vélez-Ibáñez, C. G. (1996). *Border visions: Mexican cultures of the Southwest United States*. University of Arizona Press.

Vue, R., Haslerig, S. J., & Allen, W. R. (2017). Affirming race, diversity, and equity through Black and Latinx students' lived experiences. *American Educational Research Journal*, *54*(5), 868-903. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831217708550

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. 6th Edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital?: A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*, *8*(1), 69-91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Yosso, T. J., Smith, W. A., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. G. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659–691. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.m6867014157m707l

Zarate, M. E., & Burciaga, R. (2010). Latinos and college access: Trends and future directions. *Journal of College Admission*, *209*, 24-29.

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# CULTIVATING THE CHICANO/LATINA/O/X FACULTY PIPELINE ACROSS HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTIONS (HSI) SYSTEMS: THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF HSRIs IN TRANSFORMING THE PROFESSORIATE

**Frances Contreras**
*University of California, Irvine*

**Samantha Prado Robledo and Valerie Gomez**
*University of California, San Diego*

**AUTHOR NOTE**
Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Frances Contreras, School of Education, email: frances.contreras@uci.edu.

**ABSTRACT**
The production of Chicano/Latino faculty has remained stagnant over the past 20 years, in part due to limitations in the production of doctoral students, hiring Latino faculty, and uneven experiences in graduate school. This article provides important findings related to the production of Latinx doctoral students and faculty in California, at a time when all public systems of education are HSI systems in the state. Latinx ladder rank faculty remain below five percent and doctoral student enrollment has remained stagnant, between 9 to 11% since 1998. Implications and recommendations for improving Latinx graduate student outcomes are also presented.

***Keywords***: Latinx faculty, Latinx doctoral students

## Introduction

The need to cultivate the next generation of Latinx leaders in higher education has never been more urgent or clear. The University of California is a major producer of the nation's faculty across disciplines, and prior to Proposition 209, was among the top five producers of faculty for California and the nation (Kidder & Gándara, 2015). Proposition 209 has been detrimental to the faculty

pipeline in California by narrowing the pipeline to the professoriate (Contreras, 2019; Garces, 2012; Kidder & Gandara, 2015). Since 1999, Chicano/Latino/x graduate students at UC have never exceeded 10%, with stagnant progress over a 20 year-period (Contreras, 2019). While the Latinx undergraduate population across the system is 25% of all students, the graduate student population lags far behind the percent of white graduate students across every subfield examined. The low levels of Latinx representation in graduate school narrows the potential pool of faculty for UC and the nation.

California is home to 174 Hispanic Serving Institutions and 46 Emerging HSIs (EHSIs) (Ed Excelencia, 2020). Nationally, over 37 states are now home to Hispanic Serving Institutions. While the majority of HSIs are in the community college sector, six out of nine undergraduate degree granting UCs are now Research I HSIs (RHSIs). California has witnessed a transformation of its premier public university system over the past 20 years, with Latinx students now constituting over 25% of undergraduates across the entire system. Yet, few systemic levers exist to understand whether these institutions are responsive to the Latinx student population (Contreras, 2019) in providing a foundation for them to academically thrive and progress beyond the baccalaureate degree. Latinx faculty remain less than 5% of all UC faculty, and this trend has spanned the past 30 years. Very little progress has been made to diversify the Latinx pool of ladder-rank faculty, which ultimately has implications for the graduate student pipeline. This article addresses the policy context and systemic growth and trends in Latinx faculty and graduate students across the ten-campus UC system.

## Relevant Literature

Scholars have argued that Proposition 209 (1998) would lead to a cascading effect, with high concentrations of Latinx students gaining access to moderately or less selective campuses (Contreras, 2005; Gándara, 2000; Orfield & Miller 1998) after the passage of Proposition 209 in California. While this may have been the initial effect of the anti-affirmative action policy (Kidder & Gandara 2015), college choice is now a much more complex decision with several factors beyond academic competitiveness or accessibility of the institution. The campus climate (or perceived campus climate), outreach efforts, proximity to family, and existing infrastructures to support Latinx students are also critical factors for college selection for Latinx students (Perez & Ceja, 2015; Pérez & McDonough, 2008). It is therefore likely that a combination of both selectivity and climate (among other factors) are influencing Latinx college choice. Regardless of such complexities, the UC system is now witnessing a larger critical mass of Latinx students.

Literature in the field of higher education is emerging with respect to HSIs, specifically, as it relates to Latinx student outcomes in select HSIs or their responsiveness to Latinx students (For examples, see Contreras, 2019; Contreras et al., 2008; Malcom et al., 2010; Núñez et al., 2015) and shifting identities as college campuses become Hispanic Serving Institutions (Garcia, 2016). Few researchers are examining the systemic responses to having the majority of their postsecondary institutions demographically transform into HSRIs in a state where the Latinx population is the largest ethnic population.

It is no secret that higher education facilitates the transference of knowledge, production of knowledge, innovation, and helps foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills across all key stakeholder groups. Higher education also represents a pathway to social and economic mobility for historically underserved and underrepresented communities. Faculty play a critical role in what knowledge is transferred and help to shape the climate for learning within universities (Hurtado, 2001; Hurtado et. al., 2008; Umbach, 2006). Many Latinx students are less likely to know what pathways are necessary for certain careers, particularly those requiring an advanced degree. Thus, Latinx undergraduates are less likely than their peers to pursue doctoral degrees despite comprising a critical mass of the UC system. As the doctoral student data showed, the percentage of doctoral students in the UC system has remained stagnant over the past 20 years.

A good portion of Latinx faculty in academia were first-generation students and can relate to being the first in their family to attend college. In a study of 50 high achieving Latina/os, Gándara (1995) found that successful Latinos and Latinas in her sample were driven by their desire to give back to the next generation. Faculty, therefore, play an important role in mentoring undergraduate and graduate research, which provides early exposure to academia and the field of research. System-wide UCUES data (2018) further show Latinx undergraduate students with limited experience in conducting undergraduate research with a faculty member. In 2018, only 19% of Latinx students had conducted research with a faculty member, while 81% (out of 15,473 Latinx respondents) reported “no” when asked if they had ever conducted research with a faculty member. Twenty-six percent of white students and 24% of Asian American students reported conducting research with a faculty member. These data suggest a need for undergraduate research opportunities for all students, particularly underrepresented and first-generation students that are more likely to have limited access to professional networks in their home and community contexts.

Because graduate students represent a pool of future faculty for the UC System and the nation, it is also critical to understand the production of new Ph.Ds. Graduate school is a critical turning point for emerging scholars as they explore entering academia following degree completion. Therefore, this article also explores the results of a system-wide survey of Chicano/Latino doctoral students and their experiences in their graduate program. Utilizing a faculty system-wide survey and graduate student data helps us to further unpack the experiences and navigational processes of these key stakeholders. We seek to utilize the results to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the faculty and graduate student trends at emerging and designated HSRIs in California?
2. What are some of the factors that contribute to these trends for doctoral students within the UC system, as measured by the UC Doctoral experience survey?

While the authors realize secondary data and trends are somewhat limited in unpacking the totality of the experiences or systemic microaggressions experienced across UC campuses, there are select data points and trends that tell their own story and call for greater attention and investment to enhance doctoral student and faculty diversity. This article provides important and relevant findings for the nation and postsecondary systems that will need to be increasingly

relevant and responsive to the needs of Latino students (Contreras, 2019) and communities as the nation's demography continues to shift and diversify.

## Methods

This article offers a critical examination of Latinx faculty and graduate student trends across 10[1] UC campuses. We utilize secondary data from the UC Information Center on Latinx faculty and graduate student trends by campus. In addition, these system and institutional data allow for a critical policy and systemic analysis of Latinx composition by field and discipline. We also utilize data from UC's doctoral experience survey maintained through the UC Information Data Center. For the doctoral student survey data, 12% of respondents were Latino. Together, these data allow for a comprehensive overview of the shifts that have occurred across the system in undergraduate composition (30% of all UC Enrollment in Fall 2021) but have remained stagnant for Latinx faculty and doctoral students. For example, Latinx faculty constitute a mere five percent of the UC System's domestic Latino faculty, while Latinx doctoral students comprise 11.8% (UC Information Center, 2021).

### *Demography & Policy Context*

Over the past fifty years, the United States has experienced sizeable shifts in the racial and ethnic distribution of residents, with the Latinx population growing from 4.8% of the U.S. population in 1970 to over 18% in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). California has also witnessed dramatic shifts in the demographic growth of the Latinx population, with Latina/o residents growing from 12% of the population in 1970 (accounting for 2.4 million residents) to 39% in 2018 (15.5 million residents). Latinx residents are expected to increase to 43% of the state's population by 2030, while the white population will constitute 34% of the state's population (PPIC, 2016). This demographic growth stems from a combination of birth rates, migration, and immigration.

With the consistently changing demographic landscape of the state, however, educational attainment has remained relatively low among Latinx residents compared to other racial/ethnic groups. This is in part due to a combination of systemic inequities, limited opportunities to learn, and the lack of postsecondary investment in Latinx students historically and presently (Valenzuela, 1999; Tienda & Mitchell, 2006; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). As a result, Latinx generational progress has stalled among Latinos and poverty rates remain high (Telles & Ortiz, 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009) as Latinos are concentrated in lower-wage jobs with limited mobility. Census data for California residents provides a snapshot of the differences in educational attainment between groups, with only 13% of Latinos earning a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 44% of whites, 26% of African Americans, 53% of Asian Americans, and 14% of American Indians in the state (American Community Survey, 2018). Latinos experienced the lowest levels of educational attainment in the state at a time when they represent over 55% of the K-12 system and 40% of the state population (American Community Survey, 2018).

Despite the fact that Latinos are 40% of the state's population, they represent only 13% of those with a bachelor's degree or greater in 2018. Herein lies the challenge and opportunity for the

University of California system—to emerge as a systemic leader for raising educational attainment rates among Latinx residents, thereby reshaping communities and contributing to generational progress.

## Transformed Public Education Systems in California

The Latinx community has altered the landscape of public education systems in California over the past twenty-five years, with Latinx students representing a large base of its student population. Figure 1 shows the transformation of UC into an HSRI system, with the majority of UCs now classified as HSIs and greater than 25% Latinx enrollment.

**Table 1**

*UC Latinx Enrollment, by Campus, Fall 2018 (Percent)*

| UC CAMPUS | LATINX ENROLLMENT FALL 2018 | HSI Designation | Year Achieved Status |
|---|---|---|---|
| **BERKELEY** | 15 | Emerging HSI | NA |
| **DAVIS** | 25 | HSI | 2019 |
| **IRVINE** | 25.7 | HSI | 2017 |
| **LOS ANGELES** | 21.3 | Emerging HSI | NA |
| **MERCED** | 51.6 | HSI | 2010 |
| **RIVERSIDE** | 39.2 | HSI | 2008 |
| **SAN DIEGO** | 21 | Emerging HSI | NA |
| **SANTA BARBARA** | 25.6 | HSI | 2015 |
| **SANTA CRUZ** | 27.6 | HSI | 2012 |
| | | | |

*Note*: The source of this table is UC Information Center.

However, having a critical mass of Latinx students has not resulted in "Latinx responsive" institutions (Contreras, 2019), or those that elevate the "servingness" aspect of the HSI identity (Cuellar, 2014; Garcia, 2016; Garcia et al., 2019). The first HSRI in the UC system was UC, Riverside, meeting the requirements for federal designation in 2008. The most recent HSRI is UC, Davis. The transformation of the UC system into an HSRI system is notable and represents an opportunity for the campuses to cultivate greater numbers of undergraduates to pursue graduate school and specifically doctoral degrees.

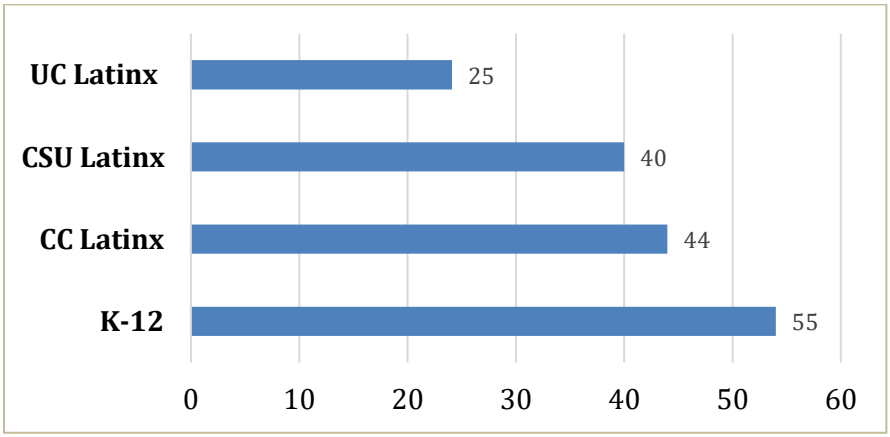
However, despite having a critical mass of Latinx students in schools, colleges, and universities, it is important not to conflate critical mass with student success, or assume that all Latinx students are no longer minoritized, do not experience microaggressions, or do not face inequities in their schooling experiences. Even though the student population has dramatically

increased, those who teach Latinx students, from teachers and graduate students to faculty and staff, have not changed dramatically over the past 25 years.

The demographic shifts in California, predicted by early Latino demographers, such as Leo Estrada, has led to reshaping all public systems of education into HSI systems in the state (Figure 1), a terminology relatively new within the UC system. At the K-12 level, Latinx students represent over 55% of all K-12 students in 2019. And Latinx undergraduate students represent 44% of California's community colleges, 40% of California State University (CSU) students, and 25% of undergraduates enrolled in a UC campus. A systemic perspective on the role each public system of K-12 and postsecondary education has in educating this critical mass of California residents is essential to ensuring the state is responsive to Latinx students at all levels (Contreras, 2019).

**Figure 1**

*Latinos in K-20 Public Systems in California, 2019 (Percent)*




*Note*: The source of this figure is UC Information Center, CSU Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, California Community College Chancellor's Office, California Department of Education, 2020.

**Undergraduate Student Outcomes**

Undergraduate student representation in large public systems of higher education like the University of California system have witnessed a steady increase in Latinx students, irrespective of the Proposition 209 policy context. Yet, this critical mass of students has not translated into equitable outcomes and suggests the need for greater attention to a growing proportion of UC campuses.

According to the UC information center, the Latinx student 4-year graduation rates for first-time first-generation freshmen are below the average four-year graduation rates for all students (52% compared to 66% from 1996-2013. The Latinx two-year graduation rate among transfer students represents a smaller gap from 1996-2015 between Latinx students and the overall average, and the three-year graduation rates among transfer students rose considerably when using three- and four-year graduation rates. While the three-year graduation rate for Latinx transfer students in 2014 was over 82%, the graduation rates among Latinx first-time freshmen and transfer

students show the need for improvement across UC campuses to graduate more first-time freshmen and transfer students with their bachelor's degree in a shorter time frame (2 and 4 years). The longer a student takes to graduate college, the greater the risk of attrition (Ishanti, 2006; Lee et al., 2011; Contreras et al., 2011).

The trend data further convey the need for a concerted effort to raise four-year Latinx completion rates through a range of academic supports, planning, and financial supports. College completion agendas are not new to postsecondary systems, or the nonprofit sector, as seen in the efforts to raise college completion systemically (CSU, 2009), establish a statewide Latinx College Completion agenda (Georgia in 2013), or launch a national Latinx college completion agenda (College Board, 2011). When college completion is a challenge for Latinx students, graduate school enrollment is compromised.

**Doctoral Student Outcomes**

Graduate students represent a pool of future faculty for the UC System and the nation. Graduate school is a critical turning point for emerging scholars as they explore entering academia, industry, or other government and non-profit sectors following doctoral degree completion. The University of California is a major producer of the nation's faculty across disciplines, and prior to Proposition 209, was among the top five producers of faculty for California and the country (Kidder & Gándara, 2015). Kidder & Gándara (2015) concluded that Proposition 209 has been detrimental to the faculty pipeline in California by narrowing the pipeline to the professoriate. Graduate school represents a significant stepping stone along the pathway to the doctorate and, ultimately, to the professoriate. Latinx representation in graduate studies is critical for increasing the number of future Latinx faculty. Given the limited body of empirical research exploring racial and ethnic disparities in graduate education, very little is known about the factors that impede the success of Latinx graduate students.

Garces (2012) examined the impact of bans on affirmative action across four states with such bans (California, Washington, Texas, and Florida) and found that affirmative action bans adversely impacted graduate school representation of underrepresented students across all fields examined (engineering, business, natural sciences, social sciences, education, and humanities) with the greatest reductions occurring in engineering, natural sciences, and social sciences. While the undergraduate population across the system is nearly a quarter of all students, the graduate student population lags far behind the percent of white graduate students across every subfield examined below. The low levels of Latinx representation in graduate school do in fact narrow the potential pool of faculty for UC and the nation.

What has perhaps been the most devastating outcome of Proposition 209 in California, is the stagnant growth of doctoral students over the past two decades. Because doctoral admissions are highly dependent on the advisor, a long-standing pattern of exclusion and gatekeeping exists for Latinx folks pursuing doctoral programs (Posselt, 2016). Julie Posselt (2016) describes how faculty gatekeeping in graduate admissions ultimately impacts diversity in doctoral student cohorts admitted. In Fall 2019 in the UC system, Latinx doctoral students represented 10% of the 28,447

students enrolled in academic doctorate programs (University of California Information Center, 2020). When examining doctorate degree completion rates, a similar trend emerges. During the 2018-2019 academic year, only 326 of 4,098 (7.9%) doctorate degrees were awarded to Latinx students (University of California Information Center, 2020). The data reveal stark racial and ethnic disparities in doctoral enrollment and completion rates throughout the UC system. This phenomenon, however, is not unique to the UC system. Latinx students are grossly underrepresented in graduate education throughout the U.S. According to the National Science Foundation Survey of Earned Doctorates (2019), only seven percent of all doctorate degrees were awarded to Latinx students. Tables 2 and 3 show the graduate student composition by select disciplines.

**Table 2**

*UC Graduate Students by Select Disciplines, 2015, (Percent)*

| Grad Acad Groups | African American | American Indian | Asian/ Pac Isl | Domestic Unknown | Latino (a)x | Internati onal | White |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Phys Sci, Eng & CS | 1.29 | 0.58 | 12.58 | 4.89 | 5.02 | 45.25 | 30.38 |
| Life Sciences | 2.77 | 1.05 | 16.88 | 6.92 | 8.89 | 16.29 | 47.19 |
| Social Sciences/Psych ology | 5.19 | 1.46 | 11.11 | 6.81 | 11.13 | 21.30 | 43.00 |
| Arts & Humanities | 3.86 | 1.20 | 9.48 | 8.14 | 11.38 | 13.01 | 52.93 |

*Note*: The source of this table is UC Information Center Data Warehouse, 2020.

The presence of Latinx graduate students in professional schools tells a story of limited representation across fields (Tables 2 and 3). Latino/a/x students are far below the percent of white graduate students in professional schools across the UC system. Interestingly, white students also represent the largest proportion of graduate students across disciplines (Table 2). For example, white students represent six times more students than Latinx graduate students in physical sciences, engineering, and computer science graduate programs. White students also represent approximately four times the percentage of Latinx students in social sciences/psychology fields as well as the arts & humanities. Underrepresentation is therefore not simply a feature of the field or select fields, Latinx underrepresentation is a pervasive phenomenon in graduate programs across disciplines. These data suggest that selectivity and exclusion, as noted in Posselt's research (2016), are consistent issues across UC schools.

**Table 3**

*UC Graduate Students in Professional Schools, Select disciplines, Fall 2015 (Percent)*

| Grad Prof Group | African American | American Indian | Latino (a)x | Asian/Pac Isl | White | Domestic Unknown | International |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business | 2.11 | 0.85 | 4.04 | 25.84 | 29.40 | 9.88 | 27.87 |
| Law | 4.70 | 1.40 | 11.31 | 19.26 | 51.90 | 8.06 | 3.36 |
| Education | 5.40 | 1.21 | 28.19 | 19.26 | 38.70 | 4.47 | 2.79 |
| Other Prof | 4.53 | 0.65 | 10.18 | 15.32 | 33.03 | 5.83 | 30.45 |
| Medicine | 8.08 | 0.39 | 11.42 | 29.40 | 23.63 | 26.87 | 0.21 |
| Other Health Science | 4.59 | 0.83 | 9.76 | 33.63 | 30.71 | 15.74 | 4.75 |

*Note*: The source of this table is UC Information Center Data Warehouse, 2020.

Latinx graduate students in professional schools lag far behind their white and Asian American peers, even as Latinx undergraduate enrollment and representation continue to increase. For example, a troubling data point is the stagnant progress of Latinx graduate students in medicine, despite the expansion of UC medical schools and the health science enterprise across the UC system. In a study conducted by David Hayes-Bautista et al., (2000), the study authors warned the field about the Latinx physician shortage at a time when the Latinx population in California was poised for dramatic and continuous growth and patients were becoming more diverse, bilingual, and urged the field to address the limited medical/clinical research agendas focused on the Latinx population. Using recent data on Latinx graduate students in medical school, Sanchez and colleagues replicated the seminal study on Latinx physicians in California (Hayes-Bautista et al., 2000), and showed that no progress has been made in the production of Latinx folks in the medical field in California in over 30 years (Sanchez et. al., 2015). Sanchez and colleagues (2015) argue that the Latinx physician shortage has worsened over the past 30 years, with California expecting to witness a shortage of primary care providers by 2030 (Spetz et al., 2017). The UC system has the opportunity to both meet the state's demand for physicians and diversify the pool of doctors in the process.

In addition to the field of medicine showing stagnant progress, the representation of Latinx graduate students in business has witnessed very little progress over the fifteen years examined, slightly over three percent in 2000 to four percent in 2015. The one field that has experienced considerable growth in the number of graduate students over time, is the field of education in the UC system. Education has seen the greatest growth in Latinx graduate student representation, ranging from 16.7% in 2000 to over 28.2% in 2015 across the UC campuses (Contreras, 2018). Colleges and schools and departments of education have also grown over the past two decades in the UC system, in the size of their faculty, the scope of academic programs, and the development of undergraduate majors in the field of education.

While looking at enrollments is important over time, it is perhaps even more critical to assess the experiences of Latinx graduate students enrolled in the UC system, as doctoral student socialization influences student persistence and transition into academia. According to the UC doctoral experience survey, 32% of Latinx graduate students are less satisfied with the level of mentorship they are receiving in their program and 47% are less satisfied with the career support they are receiving in their doctoral program (UC Information Center, 2019). That is close to half of the respondents, which is highly disconcerting.

While research on the implications of race and ethnicity in doctoral education is limited, a study exploring the everyday experiences of Latina/o and Black doctoral students found that dehumanizing practices and racialized aggressions were pervasive in the doctoral socialization process of the participants (Gildersleeve et al., 2011). In their qualitative study of 22 doctoral students, Gildersleeve et al. (2011) found that race and ethnicity played "salient roles in [students'] interactions" with faculty, supervisors, and peers (p. 101). Their participants noted that limited departmental and institutional resources for Graduate Students of Color, pressure to be the voice for their racial or ethnic group in classroom discussions, and experiences with racism and racial and ethnic slurs resulted in self-censorship and assimilation. The experiences of Latina/o and Black doctoral students also pushed them to seek support from their peers. Forming peer support networks provided students with spaces that affirmed their identities and a community of support in which they felt comfortable sharing their experiences (Gildersleeve et al., 2011).

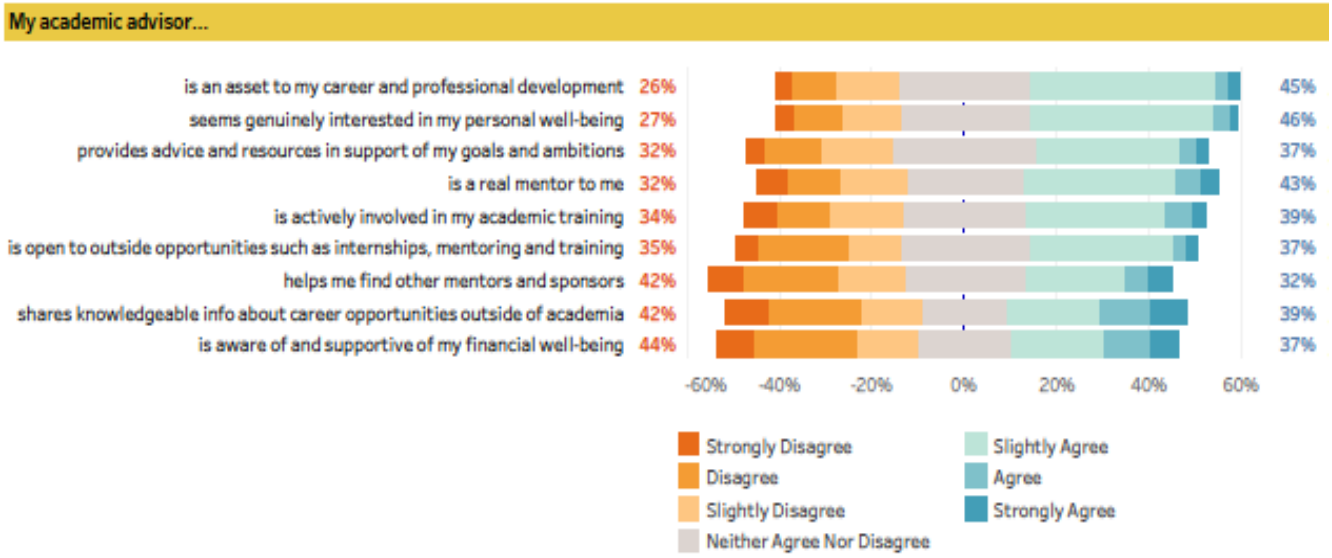
Latina/o graduate students experience various challenges throughout their doctoral programs. In a study exploring the academic socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students, Gonzalez (2006) found that many of his participants experienced marginalization, cultural isolation, and "discrimination based on race, gender, and class" (p. 358). In addition to navigating hostile academic climates, many of Gonzalez's (2006) participants described the challenges of balancing familial expectations with the demands of their doctoral programs. In response, Latina doctoral students asserted their identities, sought support from like-minded mentors and peers, and utilized their research as a form of activism for themselves and their communities. Latina doctoral students who were not successful in navigating the academic socialization process often felt exploited and marginalized.

The doctoral experience survey (where Latinx students represent approximately 11% of respondents) shows Latinx students with varied experiences in their doctoral programs (Figure 2), with 32% of students slightly to strongly disagreeing with the statement that their academic advisor is "a real mentor." In addition, 44% of Latinx doctoral students slightly to strongly disagreed with the statement that their academic advisor is "aware and supportive of [their] financial well-being." This is highly problematic for less than half of the Latino/a doctoral students to feel that their advisor is an asset to their development. Because Latinx faculty represent less than six percent of faculty systemwide, there are few Latinx faculty available to mentor and support doctoral students in their respective campuses and fields. This data point, in particular, points to the challenges Latinx doctoral students may be experiencing with their advisors in terms of mentorship and advising. In addition, only 26% of students noted their academic advisor as an asset to their

academic career and professional development. These data are concerning, and it suggests the need for targeted efforts to improve the overall experiences of Latinx doctoral students. If doctoral students lack mentorship in graduate school or are exposed to "toxic ivory towers" (Zambrana, 2018), they are less likely to consider academia and ladder rank pathways. Mentorship, therefore, has the potential to transform the experiences and pathways of Latinx doctoral students (Turner et. al., 2015).

**Figure 2**

*Latinx Doctoral Experience Survey, 2019*



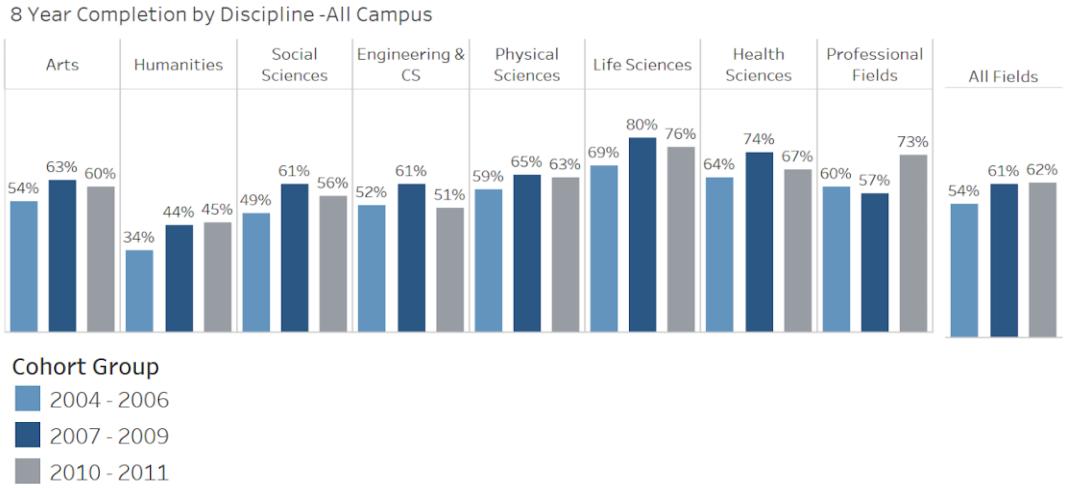

*Note*: The source of this figure is UC Information Center, Doctoral Experience Survey, 2019.

***Completion Rates***

Completion rates vary among Latinx doctoral students, however, on average there is significant room for improvement. The data in Figure 6 show low completion rates across all fields for Latinx doctoral students for three different cohorts examined. The lowest 8-year completion rates appear to occur in the humanities, social sciences and engineering.

**Figure 3**

*Latinx Doctoral Completion by Field, 8-year*

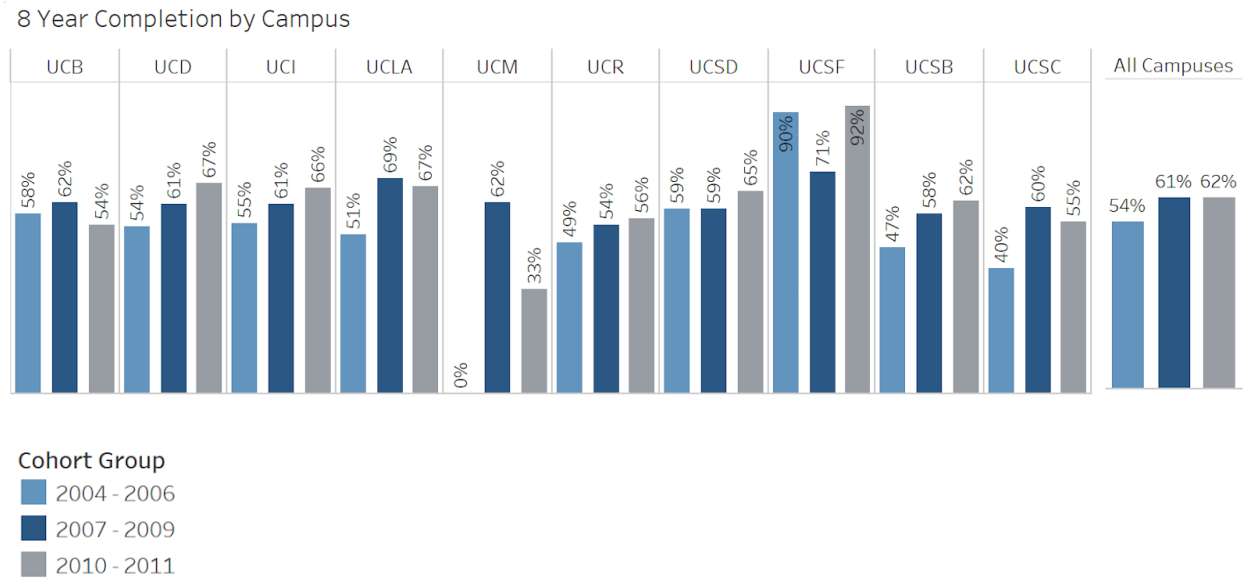



*Note*: The source of this figure is UC Information Center, 2020.

The Latinx completion rates by campus show low rates of completion for Latinx doctoral students across all of the UC campuses. What is most concerning, beyond low levels of representation, is the fact that approximately 40% of Latinx doctoral students do not complete their doctoral degree once they begin at the University of California (the range across all campuses is 38% to 46% for the cohorts included in the 8-year rate). While there may be various factors contributing to high departure rates, this high proportion of attrition exemplifies systemic failure to retain a base of future faculty, thought leaders, and institutional leaders.

**Figure 4**

*Latinx Doctoral Degree Completion Rates by Campus*




*Note*: The source of this figure is UC Information Center, 2020.

The completion rates by campus show the systemic nature of failure to support Latinx doctoral students to the point of degree completion. With the exception of UC San Francisco, which is a graduate degree granting institution, the majority of campuses are losing well over a third of doctoral students prior to earning the doctorate.

The data for gender further show disparities by gender with Latinas being less represented in doctoral degree earners across fields for 2018-2019. These data convey a story of limited opportunities for successful transition to the professoriate particularly for Latinas, with underrepresentation of Latinx doctoral student degree earners in 2019 across the majority of fields examined. This is particularly troubling, given the larger proportions of Latinas accessing higher education.

***Table 4***

*Doctoral Degree Earned by Gender, 2018-19*

| | AY 2018-19 | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | % |
| Architecture | | |
| All | 18 | 100% |
| Latinos | 0 | 0% |
| Latinas | 0 | 0% |
| Humanities | | |
| All | 432 | 100% |
| Latinos | 47 | 11% |
| Latinas | 26 | 6% |
| Business | | |
| All | 29 | 100% |
| Latinos | 1 | 3% |
| Latinas | 0 | 0% |
| Education | | |
| All | 182 | 100% |
| Latinos | 41 | 23% |
| Latinas | 27 | 15% |
| Engineering C/S | | |
| All | 991 | 100% |
| Latinos | 36 | 4% |
| Latinas | 12 | 1% |
| Interdisciplinary | | |
| All | 39 | 100% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Latinos | 0 | 0% |
| Latinas | 0 | 0% |
| Life Sciences | | |
| All | 857 | 100% |
| Latinos | 73 | 9% |
| Latinas | 36 | 4% |
| Other Health Science | | |
| All | 91 | 100% |
| Latinos | 10 | 11% |
| Latinas | 9 | 10% |
| Other Professional | | |
| All | 68 | 100% |
| Latinos | 2 | 3% |
| Latinas | 1 | 1% |
| Physical Sciences | | |
| All | 821 | 100% |
| Latinos | 51 | 6% |
| Latinas | 14 | 2% |
| Public Administration | | |
| All | 13 | 100% |
| Latino | 1 | 8% |
| Latinas | 1 | 8% |
| Social Sciences | | |
| All | 557 | 100% |
| Latino | 64 | 11% |
| Latinas | 41 | 7% |

*Note*: The source of this table is UC Information Center, 2020.

**Ladder Rank Faculty**

If Latinx faculty are not represented in the Academic Senate, (a governing body comprised of faculty from ladder rank positions) then the likelihood of Latinx scholars assuming leadership roles within and across UC is diminished. Ladder-rank faculty are in the most secure position within universities because faculty in these positions may earn tenure. The data on Latinx faculty and in leadership positions is, therefore, perhaps the most troubling to present, largely because limited progress has been made in the presence of Latinx ladder rank faculty from 2001-2018. Perhaps the greatest and understudied impact of Proposition 209 in California has been on UC ladder-rank faculty. While the literature documents that hyper-implementation of Proposition 209 has occurred over the past 20 years (Contreras et. al., 2015), where individual actors within

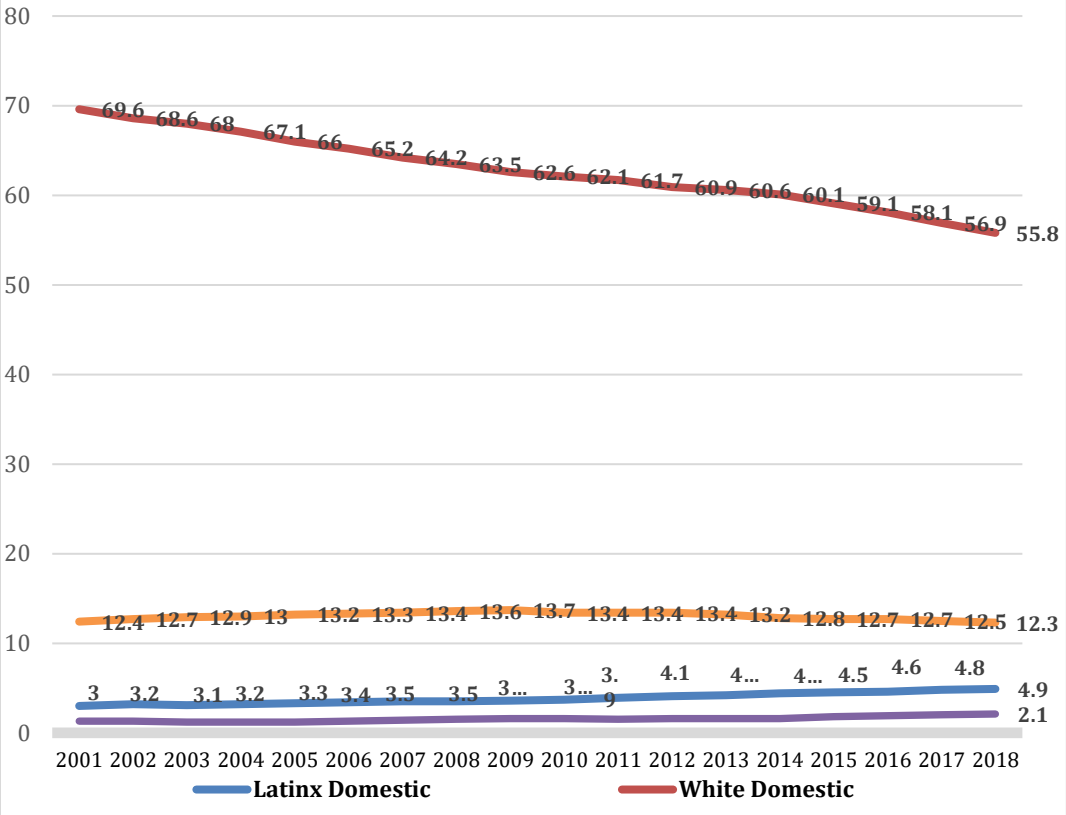
campuses interpret and utilize Proposition 209 to thwart diversity efforts, it appears to be most salient when looking at ladder rank Latinx faculty trends. The ladder rank faculty trends for domestic Latinx faculty over time show stalled progress since 2001. Latinx domestic ladder-rank faculty has ranged between three percent with incremental growth over a seventeen-year period to nearly five percent across the UC System. Latinx international ladder rank faculty has ranged between 1.3% in 2001 to 2.1% in 2018.

During this same period, the proportion of white faculty has witnessed a decline from 69.6% to 55.8%, but still remains the largest proportion of ladder rank faculty in the UC system. However, white international ladder-rank faculty have remained stagnant between 12% to 13.7% over the same time frame. White international faculty comprised more than three times the percent of Latinx domestic ladder-rank faculty until 2015 and more than two times the percentage of Latinx domestic faculty from 2016-2018. These data call for urgent attention, given the large proportion of Latinx undergraduates, the fact that the majority of UC campuses are now HSIs, and the responsibility UC has to serve its growing base of Latinx students.

**Figure 5**

*UC Ladder Rank Faculty*

*Latinx, Latino International White, White International, 2001-2018 (Percent)*




*Note*: The source of this figure is UC Information Center, Data Warehouse.

Underrepresented faculty are also more likely than their non-diverse peers to mentor undergraduate Students of Color (Milem, 2003), engage in campus service, teach diversity content in their courses, teach emerging theories that apply to diverse communities, equity or social issues, and be engaged in the local community (Turner et al., 2008; Zambrana, 2015, 2018). In addition, underrepresented faculty bring strong interdisciplinary perspectives that inform their teaching (Zambrana, 2018), which benefits all students in higher education.

However, researchers urge higher education leaders such as deans and department chairs to support and mentor Faculty of Color (Rockquemore, 2004; Zambrana, 2015, 2018), and consider cluster hire initiatives that create a critical mass of diverse facultly to combat isolation and fosters collaboration. It has been well documented that Faculty of Color are more likely to experience microaggressions from their peers, high demands, and work-related stress and tension within their academic departments Turner et. Al., 2008; Zambrana, 2015). Because the proportion of ladder-rank Latinx faculty remains alarmingly small across the UC system, these faculty may also be more likely to experience isolation within their academic departments (Zambrana, 2015). Therefore, concerted efforts to increase the critical mass of Latinx faculty may help to counter isolation, service burdens, and demands. The following recommendations are intended to inform institutional and systemic efforts to increase the number of Latinx doctoral students and faculty and improve the overall experiences of these key stakeholders in academia.

## Recommendations

1. Emphasis on graduate student support (academic, financial & personal). In public institutions, on average, doctoral student support is lagging behind private research-intensive universities (Ma and Pender, 2021). Supporting graduate students throughout their trajectory is critical in the form of competitive fellowships, HSI scholars, etc.
2. Consistently examine doctoral experiences through surveys or focus groups to better understand the challenges to persistence and completion. These data can inform ongoing intervention and department approaches for admitting Latinx doctoral students (consider cluster recruitments at the doctoral student level).
3. Increase the number of Latinx faculty across disciplines through targeted efforts such as cluster hires. The proportion of Latinx remains alarmingly low and in need of intervention.
4. Create infrastructures that support Latinx research and scholarship. Investing in research centers that focus on examining the Latinx experience in society (across disciplines) will signal to faculty and doctoral students that the university (and system) values this research and is investing in cultivating the next generation of Latinx academicians and leaders.
5. Examine pay equity for Latinx faculty. This is an area for further research and is beyond the scope of the analysis included in this article. On average, compensation for Faculty of Color and Latinx faculty is lower than their white peers in research-intensive institutions. Because data are not readily available on this topic, examining disparities in pay is an important next step to understanding departure and challenges to faculty retention.

Consistently examining pay equity by race/ethnicity will shed light on inequities and adjustments that need to be made.

## Conclusion

The Latinx community has the opportunity to meet the needs of the state to address projected shortfalls in the workforce, raise college completion rates, and contribute to a thriving economy. The implications of limited representation are far reaching, particularly as the majority of the UCs are already classified as Hispanic Serving Institutions. Yet, with limited Latinx faculty diversity, the likelihood of changing the professoriate in the next decade is tenuous. Thus, the UC system has the unique opportunity to transform the social and economic infrastructure of the state of California by investing in Latinx students at all levels, particularly the graduate level, and through concerted efforts to diversify the UC faculty, staff, and its leadership. The UC System also has the opportunity to emerge as a leading HSI system in the nation, by producing greater numbers of Latinx doctoral students and future faculty across fields, and diversifying both its faculty and leadership within the UC campuses. Cultivating the next generation of Latinx scholars and leaders within UC calls for a sense of urgency, tangible investment, and intentionality by key stakeholders as well as senior system and campus leaders. Investments made today in the Latinx population will ultimately help to determine the social, health and economic prosperity of California in the near future.

## Notes

[1] UC San Francisco is a graduate institution and therefore adds to the overall total number of UC campuses in the University of California System. There are nine undergraduate degree granting universities in the system.

## REFERENCES

American Community Survey (2018). United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/news/data-releases/2018/release.html

Campaign for College Opportunity (2018). Left out. How exclusion in our California's colleges and universities hurts our values, our students and our economy.

Contreras F. (2005). The Reconstruction of Merit Post-Proposition 209. *Educational Policy*. 2005; 19(2):371-395. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904804274055

Contreras, F. E., Malcom, L. E., & Bensimon, E. M. (2008). Hispanic-serving institutions: Closeted identity and the production of equitable outcomes for Latino/a students. In M. Gasman, B. Baez, & C. S. V. Turner (Eds.), *Understanding minority serving institutions* (pp. 71–90). New York: SUNY Press.

Contreras, F., Chapman, T., Comeaux, E., Martinez, E., Rodriguez, G., & Hutson, M. (2018). African American college choice post Proposition 209. *International Journal of Qualitative Research in Education, 31*(8), 747-768. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2018.1478153

Contreras, F. (2018). Cultivating the Next Generation of Latinx Leadership at the University of California. Report Prepared for the UC Chicanx/Latinx Leadership Summit, UC Office of

the President.
Contreras, F. (2019). Becoming "Latinx responsive": Raising consciousness & capacity in California's HSIs. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education.
Cuellar, M. (2014). The impact of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), emerging HSIs, and non-HSIs on Latina/o academic self-concept. *The Review of Higher Education, 37*(4), 499–530. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2014.0032
Ed Excelencia (2020). List of Hispanic Serving Institutions, 2019. Washington D.C. https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis
Gándara, P. (1995). *Over the Ivy walls*. New York: SUNY Press.
Gándara, P. (2002). A study of high school Puente: What we have learned about preparing Latino youth for postsecondary education. *Educational Policy, 16*(4), 474–495. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904802164002
Gándara, P., & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino education crisis.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Garces, L. M. (2012). Racial diversity, legitimacy, and the citizenry: The impact of affirmative action bans on graduate school enrollment. *The Review of Higher Education*, *36*(1), 93–132. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212470483
Garces, L. M. (2013). Understanding the impact of affirmative action bans in different graduate fields of study. *American Educational Research Journal*, *50*(2), 251–284. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212470483
Garcia, G. (2016). Complicating a Latina/o serving identity at a Hispanic Serving Institution. *Review of Higher Education,* 40(1), 117-143. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2016.0040
Garcia, G. A., Núñez, A., & Sansone, V. A. (2019). Toward a multidimensional conceptual framework for understanding 'servingness' in Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A synthesis of the research. *Review of Educational Research.* https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0034654319864591.
Gildersleeve, R. E., Croom, N. N., & Vasquez, P. L. (2011). "Am I going crazy?!": A critical race analysis of doctoral education. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 44*(1), 93-114. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2011.539472
Hayes-Bautista, D.E., Hsu, P., Hayes-Bautista, M., Stein, R. M., Dowling, P., Beltran, R., & Villagomez, J. (2000). Latino physician supply in California: sources, locations, and projections. *Academic Medicine* *75*(7), 727-736. https://doi.org/10.1097/00001888-200007000-00018
Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pederson, A. R., & Allen, W. R. (1998). Enhancing campus climates for racial/ethnic diversity: Educational policy and practice. *The Review of Higher Education, 21*, 279 –302. *Project MUSE*, https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.1998.0003.
Hurtado, S. (2001). Linking Diversity and Educational Purpose: How Diversity Affects the Classroom Environment and Student Development.
Hurtado, S., & Ponjuan, L. (2005). Latino educational outcomes and the campus climate. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 4*(3), 235–251. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192705276548
Ishanti, T. (2006). Studying attrition and degree completion behavior among first-generation college students in the United States. *The Journal of Higher Education, 77*(5), 861-885. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2006.11778947
Johnson, H., Mejia, M., & Bohn, S. (2015). *Will California run out of college graduates?* Public Policy Institute of California.
Kidder, W., & Gándara, P. (2015). *Two decades after the affirmative action ban: Evaluating the*

*University of California's race-neutral efforts*. The Educational Testing Service.
Ma, J. Pender, M. (2021). Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2021. New York: The College Board.
Milem, J. F. (2003). The educational benefits of diversity: Evidence from multiple sectors. In J. Mitchell, M. J. Chang, D. Witt, J. Jones, & K. Hakuta, (Eds.), C*ompelling interest: Examining the evidence on racial dynamics in higher education* (pp. 126–169). Stanford University Press.
Núñez, A. M., Hurtado, S., & Calderon Galdeano, E., (2015). *Hispanic Serving Institutions*. Routledge.
Orfield, G. and Miller, J. (1998). Chilling Admissions. Cambridge, MA. Harvard Education Press.
Perez, P. and Ceja, M. (2015). Higher Education Access and Choice for Latino Students Critical Findings and Theoretical Perspectives. San Francisco: Routledge.
Perez, M. (2018). *The UC president's and chancellor's postdoctoral fellowship programs, draft status update report*. UC San Diego Center for Faculty Diversity & Inclusion.
Pérez, P. A., & McDonough, P. M. (2008). Understanding Latina and Latino college choice: A social capital and chain migration analysis. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 7*(3), 249–265. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192708317620
Posselt, J. (2016). Inside graduate admissions: Merit, diversity and faculty gatekeeping. Harvard University Press.
Rockquemore, K. A., & Laszloffy, T. (2008). *The Black academic's guide to winning tenure without losing your soul*. Lynn Rienner Press.
Sanchez, G., Nevarez, T., Schink, W., & Hayes-Bautista, D. (2015). Latino physicians in the United States, 1980–2010: A thirty-year overview from the censuses. *Academic Medicine,* 90(7), 906–912.
Santos, J., L., & Acevedo-Gil, N. (2013). A report card on Latina/o Leadership in California's public universities: A trend analysis of faculty, students, and executives in the CSU and UC Systems. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 12*(2), 174–200. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192712470844
Santos, S., & Reigadas, E. T. (2004). Understanding the student-faculty mentoring process: Its effects on at-risk university students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *6*(3), 337. https://doi.org/10.2190/KGVC-7218-DPER-RMBC
Spetz, J., Coffman, J., & Geyn, I. (2017). *California's primary care workforce: Forecasted supply, demand, and pipeline of trainees, 2016-2030*. Healthforce Center at University of California, San Francisco.
Telles, E., & Ortiz, V. (2008). *Generations of exclusion: Mexican Americans, assimilation, and race*. Russell Sage Foundation.
Trejo, S. J. (2003). Intergenerational progress of Mexican-origin workers in the U.S. labor market. *Journal of Human Resources*, *38*(3), 467-489. https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.XXXVIII.3.467
Turner, C. S., González, J. C., & Wood, J. L. (2008). Faculty of Color in academe: What 20 years of literature tells us. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 1*(3), 139-168.
Turner, C.S. (2015). Lessons from the Field: Cultivating Nurturing Environments in Higher Education. *The Review of Higher Education 38*(3), 333-358. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2015.0023.
UC Information Center, CSU Office of Institutional Research and Analysis, California Community College Chancellor's Office, California Department of Education, 2020.
Umbach, P. (2006). The contribution of faculty of Color in higher education. *Research in Higher*

*Education*,47(3). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-005-9391-3

Valenzuela, A., (1999). Subtractive Schooling: U.S. Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring. New York: SUNY Press.

Zambrana, R. E., Ray, R., Espino, M. M., Castro, C., Cohen, B. D., & Eliason, J. (2015). "Don't leave us behind": The importance of mentoring for underrepresented minority faculty. *American Educational Research Journal*, *52*(1), 40–72. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214563063

Zambrana, R. E. (2018). *Toxic ivory towers*. Rutgers University Press.

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# IMPLEMENTING AB 705: IMPLICATIONS FOR EQUITABLE OUTCOMES OF LATINX STUDENTS

**Audrey Baca Lopez**
*Mt. San Jacinto College*

## AUTHOR NOTE

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Audrey Baca Lopez, Department of English, Mt. San Jacinto College, 1499 N. State St, San Jacinto, CA 92583. E-mail: dr.audreybaca@gmail.com.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the participants, gatekeepers, and change agents at Nepantla College. I am grateful for your willingness to share your thoughts, recommendations, frustrations, fears, and hopes. Thank you to the change agents who are implementing California Assembly Bill 705 in equitable ways; you are building bridges for our next generation of Latinx leaders. Gracias to my mentor and friend, Doctora Nancy Acevedo, for sharing your guidance and opportunities to create change. Gracias to my husband, Enrique Lopez, for always encouraging me. Te quiero.

## ABSTRACT

This study examined perceived implications for equitable outcomes of students based on organizational changes related to developmental education reform, California Assembly Bill 705. The research site was a Hispanic Serving Community College with a majority Latinx student population. This instrumental case study employed various methods, including semi-structured interviews, document collection and analysis, physical artifact collection, and observations. The inquiry prioritized learning from eleven participants (faculty, staff, and administration) who were charged with implementing AB 705. Findings included three primary themes related to the implications for equitable outcomes for Latinx students, *Prioritizing Equity Through Institutional Documents, Removing Institutional Barriers as a Form of Student Empowerment,* and *Threats to Equitable Outcomes*. Results of this study revealed positive implications attributed to prioritizing equity in institutional documents and removing institutional barriers. Conversely, the findings also exposed underlying problems of practice that persist in higher education, such as implicit biases,

and race-neutral and color-blind approaches to understanding equity. This research will be of interest to those invested in similar change processes.

***Keywords***: California Assembly Bill 705, developmental education reform, equity outcomes, organizational change

## Introduction

Community colleges[1] are a common gateway to higher education for Latinx students (Contreras & Contreras, 2018). Over 2.1 million students are enrolled in the California Community College (CCC) system, which is the largest system of higher education in the United States (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2020a). Over 76% of the 116 campuses are designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions[2], making it a predominately Hispanic Serving System (Contreras & Contreras, 2018).

Prior to the enactment of California Assembly Bill 705 (AB 705), Latinx students were largely placed into developmental education[3] courses (Rodríguez et al., 2018). California Assembly Bill 705 required every California Community College to "maximize the probability" that entering students enroll and complete transfer-level English or mathematics within a one-year timeframe and within a three-year timeframe for students enrolled in an English as a Second Language course by the Fall semester of 2019 (AB 705, 2017, para. 2). AB 705 was designed to partially address the historical inequities Students of Color have long faced in the policies and practices used in community colleges (AB 705, 2017). This legislative bill is especially important for Latinx students in the CCC system who intend to earn an associate degree or transfer, as they are often delayed by developmental courses.

Developmental education is identified as an obstacle to transfer and completion, particularly for Students of Color (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). For instance, in 2016, a Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) study found 87% of Latino and African American CCC students were placed into at least one developmental math or English class. Recent research has noted that remedial courses reduce completion rates for every demographic group studied (Hern et al., 2020). Another study, *The State of Higher Education for Latinx in California*, found that community colleges neglected to support more than 50% of Latinx students in their educational goals (of attaining a credential or transferring) (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018b). The same report cited that transfer is taking longer to achieve—two percent of Latinx students attain transfer in two years, and a dismal 31% of Latinx students attain transfer within six years (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018b). Overall, the success of Latinx students, to become future community leaders, is vital to the success of California—about 39% (about 15 million) of California's 40 million residents are Latinx (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018b).

Developmental reform efforts, like AB 705 and Guided Pathways[4], improve access and equity in the CCC system; thus, these reforms intend to increase degree attainment and transfer for Latinx students (Rodríguez et al, 2018). For the purpose of this study, "equity refers to a heightened

focus on groups experiencing disproportionate impact in order to remediate disparities in their experiences and outcomes" (Wood, 2019). While AB 705, Guided Pathways, and the Chancellor's Vision for Success[5] are all intertwined, moving parts of California's developmental reform efforts, this study focuses primarily on the implementation of AB 705. Research that explores initiatives like these is critical to understanding how Latinx students, and other underrepresented student populations, can achieve their intended educational goals (Rodríguez et al, 2018); moreover, at the time of the study, no other research had yet been conducted at the research site on the implementation of AB 705. This work offers a lens, from those educational leaders charged with enacting compliance to AB 705, to view the perceived implications for equitable outcomes for Latinx students based on the organizational changes related to implementation efforts.

This article begins with relevant literature about the origins of the California Community Colleges (CCC), a discussion of Hispanic Serving Community Colleges, a brief introduction to educational leadership, a review on transfer and completion for Latinx students, and an overview of recent reform efforts that are intended to improve equitable outcomes. This article continues by addressing the theoretical framework, introducing the purpose, and describing the research methodology for this study. Findings are presented, followed by a discussion and analysis. The article closes with recommendations and final remarks.

## Literature Review

Per the California Master Plan for Higher Education (1960), the CCC system serves any student who would benefit from a college education and is responsible for providing a clear pathway to transfer into the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) systems. The purpose of community colleges is to provide the interrelated functions of academic transfer, vocational education, continuing education, community service, and developmental education (Cohen et al., 2014). The California Community Colleges confer associate degrees, associate degrees for transfer, and certificates.

Though the California Master Plan for Higher Education intended to establish a clear pathway and expectations for transfer from community colleges to the CSU and UC systems (California State Department of Education, 1960), numerous studies have documented the dismal transfer rates of community college students (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Callan, 2009; Geiser & Atkinson, 2010; Public Policy Institute of California, 2016). A recent report issued by the Assembly Select Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education in California (2020) estimated that nearly half of all students enrolled in the community college system are transfer directed or intend to transfer, and only four percent of students succeed in transferring within two years, while only 38% of students succeed in transferring within six years. Including a brief review of the Master Plan for Education is helpful in understanding the role of Community Colleges are to help facilitate the transfer function in the educational pipeline. Additionally, it is important for readers to know that it is not atypical for educational reform efforts to be legislated into policy, such as AB 705 was.

**Hispanic Serving Community Colleges**

The U.S. Department of Education (2018) defines a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) as an eligible higher education institution that has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) students of which at least 25% are Hispanic. Latinx students make up a significant portion of undergraduate enrollments (Sáenz & Swan, 2018). Nationally, two-thirds of Latinx college students are enrolled in community colleges (Cox, 2009). Across the country, HSIs enroll 66% of all Latinx students (Garcia, 2019). Based on a longitudinal study of Hispanic-serving community colleges, over 51% of all students enrolled in Hispanic-serving community colleges were of Hispanic descent (Núñez et al., 2011). This means a vast majority of Latinx students are beginning their academic careers at HSIs, notably at Hispanic serving community colleges.

HSIs, unlike Tribal Colleges and Universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, originated as predominantly white institutions and became HSIs because they are situated in areas where there have been increases in Hispanic births and immigration (Hurtado & Ruiz Alvarado, 2015) and increases in Latinx college-going rates (Contreras, 2019). To best understand how HSIs serve their Latinx students, these institutions should aim to identify systems, processes, and policies that create excessive delays or obstacles for students (Garcia, 2019). Evaluating the academic and non-academic outcomes for Latinx students, including student experiences, is vital to learning how the institution truly serves its students (Contreras, 2019). Through this particular study, the work aimed to understand the student experience vis-à-vis the voice of those charged with implementing policy.

Similarly, to empower historically underserved students such as Latinx students, scholars recommend that the institutional culture of colleges and universities, especially at Minority Serving Institutions, be transformed in four major ways (Conrad & Gasman, 2015). Institutions should call out and strike down deficit views of students; blur traditional roles of faculty, staff, and students to upend top-down hierarchies; expect everyone to take responsibility for the learning and progress of students; and empower students to customize their educational pathways (Conrad & Gasman, 2015). For Hispanic Serving Institutions to be relevant to Latinx student populations, they must commit to hiring administration, faculty, and staff who reflect the demographics of the student population (Boualoy Dayton et al., 2004). Diverse faculty and staff, who can empathize with the challenges of being a first-generation, minoritized student, play a major role in mitigating ethnic and racial disparities in degree completion (Boualoy Dayton et al., 2004). Though many Latinx students attend Hispanic serving community colleges, findings are conflicted about whether completion rates for Latinx students are higher at HSIs versus non-HSIs due to various factors (Núñez et al., 2015). Scholars assert that further research is needed to have a deeper insight into how Hispanic Serving Institutions serve their critical mass of Latinx students (Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Garcia, 2019; Núñez et al., 2015).

**Educational Leadership**

As part of the literature review, it is helpful to provide a foundation for concepts around educational leadership. In particular, during times of change, the leadership of an organization

contributes to institutional culture (Kezar, 2014). In the California Community Colleges, the Chancellor released a statement to reaffirm the system's vision and to address the realities of the pandemic and social unrest of the past few years. Per the *Update to the Vision for Success: Reaffirming Equity in a Time of Recovery* (2021):

> As a system, the California Community Colleges are beginning to address institutional racism and injustice in a more explicit and intentional way. Colleges are trying to build truly diverse and inclusive colleges by encouraging frank conversations about race and institutional racism, auditing campus environments, examining curricula for cultural bias, overhauling hiring, reforming police training programs, advocating for undocumented students, and providing more direct assistance to students who have been systemically disadvantaged. These efforts especially aim to call out and correct policies and practices that are inherently racist, while also recognizing and addressing the damaging effects of ableism, sexism, and discrimination based on gender identity, sexuality, or other characteristics. (p. 12)

This statement illustrates where the priorities of the current leadership of the CCC system lie in recognizing the way the pandemic and social unrest have exacerbated the existing inequities in higher education. Similarly, Asera (2019) calls on leaders within the California Community Colleges to enact major transformational change at all levels and within the system itself. Asera (2019) posits:

> Transformation is more than adding a program or service. It entails questioning the underlying structures that have been in place and constructing new practices and norms. The scale of California's community college system and the complexity of these changes [Vision for Success, AB 705, and Guided Pathways] require leadership that is focused, flexible, and equipped with the skills and experience to carry forward this movement. (p. 5)

Murphy's (2013) work acknowledges the "unheroic side of leadership," which is relevant to consider as part of transformational changes occurring in California (p. 30). Murphy (2013) accounts for six dimensions of this unheroic side of leadership: developing a shared vision (and defining a personal vision), asking questions (and having answers), coping with weakness (and displaying strength), listening and acknowledging (while talking and persuading), depending on others (while also exercising power), and letting go (in addition to taking charge). These dimensions of leadership are particularly relevant for instituting the level of change that is required for AB 705 implementation.

Meanwhile, scholars articulate the connections between emotions and educational leadership (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). Berkovich and Eyal (2015) conducted a narrative literature review of empirical evidence from 49 studies to establish emotional aspects related to educational leaders. The scholars found that three emotions (affective empathy, care, and hope) were recurring in the theoretical literature as defining drivers of educational leadership (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015). Additional findings from the literature review included that social injustices, community resistance, and other obstacles to social justice efforts are connected to leaders' negative emotions,

whereas successful outcomes of social justice efforts on students' progress and welfare were tied to positive emotions. Ultimately, one study found that social justice efforts were considered emotionally exhausting work due to the numerous obstacles, resistance, and long hours involved (Theoharis, 2008). The discussion of emotions, as related to educational leadership, is significant because participants (faculty, staff, and administration) described their various emotions related to the implementation of AB 705 at the research site.

**Transfer and Completion for Latinx Students**

Abrica and Rivas (2017) argue, "California community colleges are *the* pathway to ensure Students of Color transfer to obtain baccalaureate and graduate degrees" (p. 55). While Abrica and Rivas' (2017) research focused mainly on community college completion and transfer, scholars note the importance of HSIs and community colleges as a bridge to later degree attainment (Contreras, 2019). More than 2.1 million students are enrolled in the CCC system (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2020a), which is at least twice as many students as the UC and CSU systems combined. Per the 2020 State of the System Report issued by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (2020b), Latinx/Hispanic students make up 45.25% of all student enrollment in the CCC system. In the same report, Hispanic students are identified as having the second lowest three-year completion rates after American Indian/Alaskan Native, among other ethnicities (Asian, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Multi-Race, Unknown/Non-Response). Further inequities lie in regional achievement gaps, with the Inland Empire and Central Valley regions reporting the lowest completion rates across the state (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2020b). This suggests that much work must still be done to better understand and close completion gaps for Latinx students as they make up a large percentage of the CCC student population.

One of the reasons identified for lower completion rates has been disproportionate placement into remedial English and math courses. Scholars note that when developmental courses are made available, colleges continue to disproportionately enroll Latinx students in them, despite recent AB 705 legislation (Hern et al., 2020). Conversely, students can complete transfer-level coursework at higher rates with support, guidance, and mentorship (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018b). Validation and care are enormously essential to persistence and completion rates for Students of Color (Wood & Harris, 2017).

**Shifts Towards Access & Equity Through Policy and Legislation**

Various states have enacted legislative and policy changes to address the shortfalls of developmental education which has disproportionately impacted Latinx students and other underserved student populations. California is also implementing various state-level initiatives to improve equitable outcomes and increase completion rates.

> California Assembly Bill 705 (2017) took effect on January 1st, 2018. The bill text states: This bill would require a community college district or college to maximize the probability that the student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in

> English and mathematics within a one-year timeframe, and use, in the placement of students into English and mathematics courses in order to achieve this goal, one or more of the following: high school coursework, high school grades, and high school grade point average. (AB 705, 2017, para. 2)

This law is an intentional shift to close equity gaps, facilitate degree completion, and increase academic transfer at community colleges in California (Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2017). As Students of Color were more likely placed into remedial courses due to placement practices that rely on high-stakes placement tests (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2014), equity concerns were among the main reasons for the shift to embrace the use of multiple measures for placement (AB 705, 2017).

The goal of AB 705 is to not cause added delay by placing students into remedial courses. Scholars have noted that Latinx students have a greater tendency to enroll part-time, which lengthens the time for degree completion (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Numerous scholars have argued that standardized assessments alone are not effective for student placement (Henson & Hern, 2014; Hodara et al., 2012; Rodríguez, 2014; Scott-Clayton et al., 2014). To improve student completion of transfer-level math and English requirements, researchers recommend that students: 1) register for compressed courses; 2) engage in integrated developmental courses; 3) participate in corequisite courses; and 4) enroll directly in college-level classes, among other options (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2014; Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness, 2018). These suggestions require campuses to have one or more of these options available for students. More recent findings encourage students to enroll directly into transfer-level math and English courses, with co-requisite supports if needed, as research is proving that completion gaps are closing for Latinx and Black students who have access to these options (Hern et al., 2020). With the enactment of AB 705 in combination with the statewide adoption of the Guided Pathways Framework and the Chancellor's Vision for Success, the California Community College System strives to close equity gaps and increase degree completion rates.

CCC system leaders stressed the potential effects of AB 705 and urged top-level campus administrators and academic senate presidents to see how "these changes represent an opportunity to close achievement gaps and explore new strategies to move students more swiftly toward their goals as part of a guided pathways framework" (Hope & Bruno, 2017). The Guided Pathways framework is described in the Vision for Success as a means of facilitating system-wide goals and commitments (Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2017). It is identified as an "organizing framework to align and guide all initiatives aimed at improving student success," such as student support and success, basic skills, and equity programming (Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2017, p. 21). As a reminder, the Chancellor's Vision for Success (2021) outlines the CCC system goals and commitments for five years (to 2022) and was recently updated to reaffirm the goals in context with the realities of the social and health traumas of recent years. The goals include reducing equity gaps as well as regional achievement gaps, increasing transfer and completion rates, increasing the percent of CTE students who attain jobs in their field, and decreasing the average number of units accumulated by CCC students.

Guided Pathways was adopted system-wide, yet it is not required by law. Like AB 705, the Guided Pathways framework is at various stages of being fully implemented on different campuses. The framework, recognized nationally, aims to increase access and success using a "fundamental redesign" of community college's organization and culture from "access alone to a focus on access with success" (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 3). The four pillars of Guided Pathways entail: (1) clarify a clear, curricular path; (2) help students determine and enter their path; (3) help students stay on their selected path; (4) ensure learning is intentional (Bailey et al., 2015). The implementation of AB 705 fits into the framework of Guided Pathways as it is intended to help students enter their educational pathway.

These key changes in the CCC system (AB 705, Guided Pathways, and the Chancellor's Vision for Success) are opportunities to reconsider how community colleges have historically pushed out and left out Students of Color (Acevedo-Gil, 2018; Clark, 1960, 1980; California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2021). The restructuring of developmental education pathways and the shift to prioritizing access and success is pivotal to creating more equitable outcomes for Students of Color, especially for the high population of Latinx students enrolled in the CCC system.

## Framework

This research study employed a theoretical framework based on organizational change theory (Kezar, 2014) and drew from Gonzales, Kanhai, and Hall's (2018) work that re-imagines organizational theories from a critical paradigm. Many scholars in the field privilege Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework for equity, HSI, and MSI research (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015; Jones, 2013; Salas, 2014; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). However, Kezar (2014) and Gonzales and colleagues (2018) offered a more suitable lens for considering how the change process occurs in educational institutions and how the critical paradigm can be used to re-imagine how colleges change to implement legislative reforms.

Kezar (2014) recognizes change as "those intentional acts where a particular leader drives or implements a new direction" (p. xii). The change process includes consideration of the type of change, the context for change, and the role of agency/leadership. Type, context, and agency inform the approach (or theories to apply) to the change initiative. Kezar (2014) uses the term *change agent* to imply anyone can create change. Change is a multi-level process since leadership (and change) happens at every level. Change theory includes first order and second order change. The type of change influences the approach, or strategies, used to institute the change. To elaborate, first order change requires minor adjustments or modifications to implement change; whereas, second order change necessitates an evaluation of underlying values, structures, processes, assumptions, and culture to institute change (Kezar, 2014). Kezar (2014) asserts that organizational theories and various schools of thought are different layers of a complex process. Instead of seeing them as competing viewpoints of the same phenomenon, change agents should employ and consider a variety of organizational theories to evaluate a situation.

Likewise, Gonzales and colleagues (2018) use a critical paradigm to offer a different perspective to foreground justice. By re-imagining organizational perspectives of four schools of thought—including scientific management, organizational behavior, environmental perspectives, and organizational culture—Gonzales and colleagues (2018) envision higher education institutions as spaces where diverse people and communities converge to foster a socially just world. Gonzales and colleagues (2018) prioritize four main issues which include: 1) Labor in/justice, like the exploitation of emotional labor; 2) Intersectional justice, associated with people in academia who may be marginalized or minoritized in multiple ways; 3) Reparative justice, which considers educational institutions as tools of colonization and prioritizes repatriations; and 4) Epistemic in/justice, the concept that society is dominated by paternalistic, white male rules which limit who is valued as a knower and producer of knowledge.

The notion of emotional labor is particularly significant in this study. Emotion and emotional labor are "a form of labor compelled by organizational norms and rules" (Gonzales & Rincones, 2013, p. 2). Miller (2001) argues that even suppressing is an emotional act; other scholars note that emotional labor has the ability to generate dissonance and dissatisfaction, which affects a person even when away from work (Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Hochschild, 1983).

Critical organizational theory invites change agents and researchers to conduct transformational educational research, which only comes from reimagining "higher education as *more than* a place where people come to be credentialed and graduated, *more than* a place where faculty and staff simply process programs and grants just as they process students" (Gonzales et al., 2018, p. 507). To better prioritize social justice and equity, researchers must embrace radically different lenses other than the traditional views that have dominated the literature and previously influenced the work of higher education institutions (Gonzales et al., 2018). The change agents in this particular study are the participants themselves, the staff, faculty, and administrators, as they hold the power to enact change, for the better or for the worse.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the implications for equitable outcomes for students at a Hispanic Serving Community College in response to California Assembly Bill 705. This article develops findings and conclusions related to one research question derived from a larger dissertation research study (Baca, 2019). The following research question evolved and was refined throughout the research process (Stake, 1995):

- What are the perceived implications for equitable outcomes of students based on organizational changes in response to AB 705?

## Research Methodology

This instrumental case study used a variety of data collection sources to "best" understand the case and capture the complexity of the issue (Stake, 1995, p. 56). The research, conducted at a Hispanic Serving Community College, employed various data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, document collection and analysis, physical artifact collection, and observations

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Collecting multiple types of data from various sources allows for triangulation (or validity) and increased trustworthiness in qualitative research (Glesne, 2011). Primarily, the study focused on learning from eleven participants (faculty, staff, and administration) who were charged with implementing AB 705 at the research site, Nepantla College[6] (pseudonym). Interviews provide clarity into initiative implementation, especially at MSIs and for Students of Color (Jones & Assalone, 2016).

Nepantla College student populations were diverse; however, it is significant to note that the majority (over 70%) of the student population identified as Hispanic or Latinx. Not only is Nepantla College a Hispanic Serving Institution, but it serves a high percentage of Latinx students. The faculty and administration; however, do not reflect this demographic. Conversely, a majority (over 70%) of the faculty and administration of Nepantla identified as white.

Utmost care was taken during the research process to uphold ethical considerations such as procedural ethics (with IRB mandates), situational ethics (by repeatedly reflecting on ethical decisions), relational ethics (by being mindful of my actions), and exit ethics (by considering how to share the results and leave the scene) (Tracy, 2010).

**Participants**

Potential participants were purposefully selected based on their contribution to the implementation of AB 705 at Nepantla College (Creswell, 2013). Participants were recruited based on their key role in implementing changes. Consideration was given to those participants who had a direct influence on decision-making and implementation practices, which is especially significant for Students of Color (Wood & Harris, 2017). In total, 19 potential participants were invited via email; 11 participants were formally interviewed. Participant positions ranged from faculty to administration to supplemental support staff, with four administrators, six full-time faculty members, and one supplemental support staff member. To maintain confidentiality, participants were given pseudonyms.

Part-time faculty, who are often responsible for teaching developmental education courses (Hern & Snell, 2013), were included in requests to participate; however, no contingent faculty members responded. This lack of participation may be related to labor injustice as described by Gonzales and colleagues (2018) and demonstrated a lack of equitable inclusion, which may have also extended to other AB 705 activities. In 2018, Nepantla College's adjunct faculty accounted for over 70% of all faculty, and nearly 70% of the adjunct faculty identified as white (Nepantla College, n.d.). This percentage was slightly higher than the CCC system patterns (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018a). Part-time faculty were included in recruitment attempts because they are often left out of various opportunities (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014) and are underrepresented in research (Townsend & Twombly, 2007).

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Participants were interviewed at a time and location determined by the participant, both in person and via Zoom (a web conferencing service). The semi-structured interviews ranged

from 35-60 minutes, conducted during a single session. The potential for a follow-up interview was included in the informed consent in case additional clarification was needed. Participants were advised there were no incentives for participation in the study to ensure no perception of coercion. However, after data collection was complete participants received a professional development book[7] worth no more than $20, purchased out of the author's personal funds. Audio recordings were transcribed using Rev.com, an online transcription service. The transcripts were reviewed for accuracy by the participants and researcher.

Methods also included document collection, observations, and physical artifact collection. Document collection included the campus equity plan, organizational websites, committee agendas and minutes, and professional development proposals. All documents provided insight into organizational changes related to the implementation of AB 705. Each data type aided in triangulating the policy implementation phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Observation occurred at an Equity Committee meeting, including general campus observations, to help answer the research question. Detailed field notes and a reflective journal were kept to navigate subjective researcher observations and identify key correlations between interviews, artifacts, and observations (Gonzales & Rincones, 2013). Physical artifacts are objects that are found within the research setting; they are useful in supplementing interview and observation data (Merriam, 1998). Brochures, flyers, and pictures of the research site gave insight into the change processes and campus culture. Artifacts, like student newspapers, the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 Class Schedules, and the 2018-19 Course Catalog supported participant accounts and verified findings.

Data were analyzed applying a deductive approach with predetermined codes formed from the research question and theoretical framework (Saldaña, 2016; Stake, 1995). Additional emergent codes (Saldaña, 2016) were added during the data analysis process to expose new meanings about the case (Stake, 1995).

Data were stored, organized, coded, and analyzed using NVivo, a software designed to analyze qualitative data. The data were coded to develop themes using eclectic coding, which utilizes a purposeful combination of coding methods, including process coding and in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016). Then, pattern coding was applied to construct categories and identify major themes from the data (Saldaña, 2016).

## Limitations

The main limitation was the length of time in the field (Tracy, 2010). A longitudinal study could provide more insight into the policy changes and implementation processes; however, this study was conducted during a single semester, Spring 2019. Assembly Bill 705 required compliance by Fall 2019, and a longitudinal study would have allowed for a more complete picture of the change process (Kezar, 2014). Also, due to time constraints, this study prioritized only one research site. In a system-level reform like AB 705, conducting a comparative case study (Stake, 1995) would certainly yield further critical insights into how colleges are implementing policies and practices their response to AB 705[8].

The sample size was another limitation. Creswell (2014) notes participants can be added until saturation is achieved. This study intended to include adjunct faculty as participants, but none responded. Had additional resources been available, more participants from various departments and positions would have been included. Even with these limitations, rigorous data collection methods produced meaningful findings and themes (Tracy, 2010).

## Positionality

All writing is influenced by the researcher's experiences, values, and biases (Creswell, 2013); it is key to explain my positionality for readers. Thus, I am explicit in aspects of my identity that have shaped my role as a researcher including my experience in the education system and the development of my Critical worldview.

I am an educated, multi-ethnic Latina. I have worked for over 15 years in K-12 schools, community colleges, and in the California State University system serving students who have been historically underserved and marginalized. As a first-generation student, I obtained my bachelor's and master's degrees from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. I consistently worked two part-time jobs to pay for expenses while attending school full-time. I benefited from Pell Grants to fund most of my undergraduate schooling and took out loans to pay for my graduate coursework. I chose to obtain my doctorate in Educational Leadership from California State University, San Bernardino because it prioritized social justice, equity, and educational transformation. While it was an affordable way for me to further my professional learning and build a network in higher education, as a Latina, I was drawn to the Latinx representation in the doctoral program's leadership and faculty (at the time—Dr. Nancy Acevedo, Dr. Edna Martinez, and Dr. Louie Rodriguez).

Although I persisted through California's public higher education system, I know I am one of few who have navigated this pipeline. Approximately 0.3 percent of Latinas earn a doctorate degree (Pérez Huber et al., 2015). I am invested in learning about how educational reform efforts, like AB 705, are impacting Latinx students, particularly at the community college level, because it is a gateway for so many to further education.

Higher education, and an advanced degree, have provided me with numerous advantages: to love my field of work, to advocate for social justice and equity, and to create positive change in our systems of education. However, they have also provided me with the realization of how much work is left to be done and how stark the reality is for those who do persist to terminal degrees.

## Findings

Three themes emerged from the data findings for the research question: What are the perceived implications for equitable outcomes for students based on organizational changes? The first theme, *Prioritizing Equity Through Institutional Documents,* showed how Nepantla College's mission statement evolved over time to be more inclusive and how institutional documents influenced equity-focused changes, such as the campus equity plan (also known as the Integrated Plan), in alignment with AB 705. *Removing Institutional Barriers as a Form of Student Empowerment*

illustrated how removing barriers, like discontinuing the use of the ACCUPLACER[9] placement test and offering transfer-level math pathways like social statistics courses created a positive trajectory for equitable outcomes for students. The third theme, *Threats to Equitable Outcomes*, underscored perceived threats to equity. These threats consisted of fixed mindsets, inequitable practices, and deficit perspectives. Furthermore, findings revealed that acts of sabotage, implicit biases, and race-neutral and color-blind approaches to understanding equity (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) placed equitable student outcomes at risk. Findings illuminated the role legislative changes take in promoting equitable reforms while also exposing inequitable practices and deficit mindsets that still endure in higher education.

Findings associated with *Prioritizing Equity Through Institutional Documents* detailed how Nepantla College recently changed its mission statement to be more inclusive of its diverse student population (Jayden, personal communication, March 2019), which is in alignment with scholar recommendations to become Hispanic-serving, and not just Hispanic enrolling institutions (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015; Garcia, 2019). However, findings also showed that while the mission statement was revised, it did not explicitly state that the campus was a Hispanic Serving Institution.

Other findings related to *Prioritizing Equity Through Institutional Documents* revealed that the 2017-19 Integrated Plan (Basic Skills Initiative, Student Equity, and Student Success and Support Program) was a foundation for the college's response to AB 705. This institutional document is required by all California Community Colleges as an accountability tool for promoting student success and equity. In 2017, CCC instituted the Integrated Plan reporting, which merged the planning process of three different initiatives: the Basic Skills Initiative (which supported developmental education), Student Equity Program (which ensured equal educational opportunities by developing goals and activities to address disparities), and Student Success and Support Program (which focused on access and completion). This information clarifies how Nepantla College used the Integrated Plan to drive equity efforts at the research site and how campus initiatives outlined in the plan aligned with the intent of AB 705 to support equitable outcomes for students.

Additionally, the Integrated Plan is tied to federal funding that supports activities and goals outlined in the plan. While the Integrated Plan is a required document, the findings indicated that the campus administration had already begun to intentionally prioritize equitable outcomes for students, which were in alignment with the intent of AB 705 legislation, prior to and during the time of the study.

While Nepantla College's Integrated Plan was not referenced by name by any of the participants as a foundation for AB 705 compliance work, many of the activities outlined in the document were discussed at length in interviews and observations. Latinx students were identified in the college's Integrated Plan as the largest target group because over 70% of the student population identified as Hispanic/Latino (Nepantla College, n.d.). Activities—such as the bridge program, Early Alert[10] and intrusive counseling, and professional development with On Course[11] and Reading Apprenticeship[12]—served as elements of the college's response to AB 705 and

existed before the legislation was enacted. Other activities not in the 2017-19 Integrated Plan—like establishing a self-guided placement survey and eliminating requirements for pre-requisites and the placement test—were more recent responses to AB 705. Overall, the foundations of the college's response to AB 705 were informed by actions directly and indirectly outlined in the Integrated Plan. These findings demonstrate the need to incorporate equity explicitly into institutional planning and practices as part of the commitment to equity and Hispanic-servingness (Felix & Fernandez Castro, 2018; Garcia, 2019).

Findings from the second theme, *Removing Institutional Barriers as a Form of Student Empowerment*, demonstrate what Nepantla College did to remove barriers, like offering a two-semester sequence for students to complete transfer-level English within one year and creating a self-guided placement survey to use instead of a placement exam. There were many positive implications for student equity related to the college's AB 705 implementation, which greatly influenced the majority of the Latinx student population at Nepantla College. Alex, an administrator involved with placement and counseling, explained the students were empowered by being able to register directly in transfer-level coursework. Nelky, a top-level administrator, shared that AB 705 allowed for increased opportunity related to student completion. For instance, Nelky noted that more students were able to take contextualized math and quantitative reasoning courses that were more aligned with their majors, like a social statistics course for humanities and liberal arts majors. The college even planned to hire additional social statistics faculty (full-time and part-time) to support the increased demand for those courses. Other departments, like the business department, considered establishing a new math/quantitative reasoning curriculum in response to AB 705. Similarly, the Public Policy Institute of California (2017) recommended colleges offer more statistics and contextualized math/quantitative thinking pathways as options for conventional developmental math sequences.

Findings related to the third theme, *Threats to Equitable Outcomes,* demonstrated fixed mindsets, deficit views of student capabilities, and inequitable practices which present negative implications for equitable outcomes for students. Findings also indicated defiance toward supporting student success (in certain departments of the college), the existence of implicit biases, and race-neutral and color-blind approaches to understanding equity. The demographics of the student population, mainly Latinx, contrasted with the demographics of the faculty and administration, the majority of whom are white. These findings connect back to the roles of faculty, staff, and administrators and how they can facilitate or hinder student success (Carrasquillo, 2013). Scholars propose that validation and positive student engagement with faculty, counselors, staff, and administration are vital especially for Students of Color (Osei-Kofi & Rendon, 2005; Wood & Harris, 2017).

This concept resonated in a story that Rae, an administrator, disclosed:

> We were sitting at the academic senate and…[the] math department chair was giving an update on [the self-guided placement survey] for students…one of the faculty members asked, "And what are you doing for as far as helping the students be successful in math?" And another one of [the math] faculty…spoke up in front

> of the whole academic senate and said, "There's nothing in AB 705 that says that we have to work on students being successful." That caused quite a stir in the academic senate meeting, but that's exactly how [the] math faculty feel. They are not responsible for student success. That's what they believe. (personal communication, February 2019)

Rae's testimony portrayed a vivid picture of the math department culture. This example demonstrated systemic injustice for diverse student populations, which in this instance, stressed the limited views of responsibility math faculty had for student success at Nepantla. While not all the faculty held deficit views, several participants confirmed the math department, and some math faculty were major barriers to student success. Per a top-level administrator at the research site, the deficit perceptions from faculty and administration had extremely negative effects on completion and persistence rates in transfer-level math courses and particularly in the several levels of developmental math courses the department offered (Nelky, personal communication, March 2019). In addition, this example is also indicative of the emotional labor incurred by faculty, staff, and administrators as part of the AB 705 implementation throughout the college. In other words, there were implications for faculty who were invested in fostering student success by having to navigate a hostile environment fostered by deficit perspectives. On the other hand, the same can be said for the faculty, staff, and administration who experienced high levels of emotional labor as part of the change process, including those who resisted AB 705 changes.

In another incident, identified by Tanner who was an administrator, inequitable practices surfaced in a plan by the math department:

> Basically, what the plan is at this point is, because people are placing themselves directly into college level math, so the math [faculty] who are teaching have made a public commitment to make sure and fail as many of those students as they possibly can just to prove that AB 705 is a terrible idea. (personal communication, February 2019)

Both Tanner and Jayden, a faculty member in the school of math and science, corroborated the existence of this plan at the research site. While many on the campus were in favor of the legislation, time and again, the interview data exposed problems of practice within the math department's pedagogies and deficit mindsets. Moreover, Jayden described threats to equitable outcomes related to implicit biases: "I've never heard anyone in my department use the word 'equity' or 'equitable.' I have heard them say, 'Well, of course our numbers are low, look at our demographic'" (personal communication, February 2019). Latinx students represent the largest demographic at Nepantla College. This comment demonstrated the implicit (or explicit) bias that existed among some faculty and showed how the department "never" used language to address equity.

Race-neutral and color-blind approaches to understanding equity threaten equitable outcomes for Students of Color. Color-blindness, or not "seeing" a person by their skin color, affords white people a way to convey resentment towards People of Color (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Bonilla-Silva (2014) posits that color blindness is employed to "criticize [minorities'] morality,

values, and work ethic" (p. 4). Equally, meritocratic ideologies, or views that people should be privileged and selected based on their abilities, also appeared in participant responses. The problem with meritocracy is that it does not take systemic inequities into consideration. Rae, an administrator, claimed:

> The push is, the reason why we need to get rid of the lower-level math classes and English classes, is, because we're putting up roadblocks for Students of Color, and that, that's a problem and we need to change that. So, what we're in one way, and I'm just going to be honest here, what we're suggesting is Students of Color can't do the work of students who are white. What's the issue there? We need to be really careful there. (personal communication, February 2019)

Rae at first acknowledged the need for reform and stated that below transfer-level courses are barriers for Students of Color, but also identified the requirements of AB 705 as a "push." The reference to "push" seemed to be referring to the fact that AB 705 was an external mandate legislated by the state and is, therefore "pushed" upon the college. Then, Rae shifted into notions of meritocracy with "what we're suggesting is students of color can't do the work of students that are white" (personal communication, February 2019). This comment conveyed that AB 705 is less of a means to promote access and equity and more of a way to upend meritocracy, suggesting that Students of Color need to earn transfer-level coursework. This is contrary to the intent of AB 705, which articulates that students' high school grades should be used as the primary means of placement in English and math, as these grades have been proven to be far more reliable at indicating student performance in college (Bahr et al., 2019).

Initiatives such as AB 705 and Guided Pathways, though aimed at increasing access and equitable outcomes, are not always executed with an equity mindset by the individuals working directly with students. AB 705 could not mandate practitioners to change their values and beliefs. During the interview, Rae contemplated the worth of a community college degree:

> All students need to rise to the level of college level content. What are we giving a degree for at any college or university if we're not expecting students to learn a certain level of content of material? So, for the HSI students, I don't see HSI students any different than any of my other students. I don't see Black students any different than white students as far as this goes. (personal communication, February 2019)

In this quote, Rae displayed a belief in high expectations as a standard for education, concerned primarily with the rigor of the content students should grasp to earn a degree. This belief is not misplaced; yet, maintaining color-blind views, it makes it challenging for Rae to acknowledge the systemic barriers that exist for Students of Color. Rae does not even refer to the students as Latinx, Hispanic, or Latina/o; Rae only refers to them as HSI students. Rae does use the terms Black and white though. Throughout the interview, Rae did not mention any factors that could have influenced existing systemic inequities. To restate, the administration holds an influential role in change initiatives. Rae's views of student success and equity influence policies

and practices; they have direct repercussions for student outcomes (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Wood & Harris, 2017).

While deficit and color-blind ideologies can impact equitable outcomes for students, so can the high levels of emotional labor that change agents experience during the change process. Change and external mandates brought on by AB 705 incited emotional labor in the faculty, staff, and administration interviewed. Emotional labor has the potential to yield dissonance and dissatisfaction within an individual, which can influence a person in other aspects of life, even outside of work (Fisk & Friesen, 2012; Hochschild, 1983). Frustration, lack of communication, and breakdowns in the shared governance process contributed to dissension among faculty, staff, and administration. Overall, these findings illustrated the emotional labor involved in confronting deep-seated assumptions and values during this second order change process (Kezar, 2014).

Emotional labor manifested in many participant responses and was illustrated in different ways related to AB 705 reforms. Tanner, an administrator, identified, “Mostly the curriculum, where it needs to be done, is in the math area and again, there's a great deal of resistance there” (personal communication, February 2019). Tanner corroborated the idea of resistance in certain areas of the campus, which was reported by numerous participants. As the campus was in its first semester of compliance with AB 705, some participants reported feeling frustrated at the lack of ownership to implement changes. Jaime, a faculty member, articulated the dilemma:

> It's hard to kind of do what the administration is asking, when the dean is saying, "Okay, you should be working on this," which makes kind of some sense to me. Okay, the law is the law. And then on the other hand… faculty who again, a lot of them have been here for years, think the students are stupid, don't want to basically do any work, or don't want to have to change anything. So, that makes it hard, trying to get people to change who don't want to change. (personal communication, February 2019)

Jaime stressed the challenges of implementing AB 705 where the administration, or the institutional change agents in power, is urging implementation, but some faculty reject change. This resistance to change suggests the emotional labor experienced during reform efforts. Likewise, Jaime’s assertions problematized how some faculty still hold deficit views of students, resist changing their mindsets of student capabilities, and still, others lack the motivation to change.

## Discussion

To reiterate, findings were organized into the following themes: *Prioritizing Equity Through Institutional Documents, Removing Institutional Barriers as a Form of Student Empowerment,* and *Threats to Equitable Outcomes.* The findings suggest considerable benefits for Latinx students and other underserved students at the research site. Additionally, the findings indicate challenges for Latinx students in the form of gatekeepers, those people who hold power in decision-making and progress for students such as faculty, staff, and administration. Gatekeepers have the power to withhold access and resources, which, in turn, can limit student success.

In relation to the first theme, formal institutional documents offer a framework for long-term change efforts (Kezar, 2014); these official mechanisms affect what decision-makers focus on in terms of goals and values (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015). Nepantla College increased its potential for equitable outcomes for students by revising its mission statement to be more inclusive. Mission statements can guide change and influence the way leaders prioritize (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015). Though the campus did not include its HSI status in its revised mission, which would be a next step for prioritizing equity, it did attempt to address the diversity of the students it served (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015).

The foundations of the college's response to AB 705 were built upon actions outlined in the campus' Integrated Plan. For instance, the research site identified several initiatives that aligned with the goals of AB 705 to increase equitable outcomes for students. The most powerful initiative was the campus' bridge program. Having an established bridge or promise program that provides wraparound services can greatly influence positive equitable outcomes.

The bridge program at Nepantla was a catalyst for equitable outcomes as over 80% of the participating student population identified as Hispanic or Latino (Nepantla College, n.d.). It started as a pilot project supporting 21 students and grew to serve over 1200 students with free tuition, mentoring, three weeks of intensive review of math and/or English skills, college success strategies, supplemental instruction, and access to computers/course materials. Per an administrator, Charlie, who was involved with the bridge program, students had higher retention and persistence rates in the program compared to other students who did not participate in the program (personal communication, March 2019). Faculty and staff who were involved in the bridge program seemed intrinsically motivated to do the work and committed to supporting Students of Color. Researchers emphasize the importance of retaining staff and faculty who are equity-minded, especially at Minority Serving Institutions (Conrad & Gasman, 2015). Nelky, a top-level administrator, confirmed that other measures identified in the Integrated Plan such as the use of Early Alert, intrusive counseling, and professional development for faculty with On Course and Reading Apprenticeship contributed to the positive outcomes for Latinx students on campus (personal communication, March 2019). Campus equity plans should be examined to see how campuses can leverage existing equity initiatives to further improve their implementation of AB 705 or even prioritize equity in other education reforms.

Additionally, as part of its response to AB 705, Nepantla College began offering alternative transfer-level math pathways like social statistics courses, which opened new pathways for students. This action, in combination with discontinuing the use of a single assessment for placement into transfer-level math and English courses, presents a positive outlook for equitable outcomes for Latinx students. The positive effects attributed to Nepantla's flexibility in modifying admissions and counseling pathways to increase student enrollment directly into transfer-level coursework contrasted with deficit perspectives, color-blind ideologies, and high levels of emotional labor, which held potentially negative consequences for student success and retention rates.

The threats to equitable outcomes, such as implicit biases, deficit perspectives, and especially the lack of ownership exhibited by faculty in the math department, could be detrimental to student success. Validation and positive student engagement are integral for student success, whereas the clear defiance exhibited by math faculty to support student success, and limited accountability by the department leadership, posed a major challenge for other change agents on campus who prioritized equitable access. Traditional math pathways (arithmetic to pre-algebra to beginning algebra to intermediate algebra) have long been a gatekeeping mechanism for degree completion (Public Policy Institute of California, 2017). While Nepantla College complied with AB 705 at the time of the study, the math faculty made a public declaration to fail students to prove the law did not work, which would primarily impact the majority Latinx student population on campus. Contrary to the findings of perceptions in the math department, the English department faculty and leadership did not have as much resistance to AB 705 as it was already in compliance with the law at the time of this study. The English department at Nepantla began offering a two-course sequence for transfer-level English as part of a pilot program with the Multiple Measures Assessment Project[13] (Jesse, personal communication, March 2019). The variation in responses illustrates the need to further investigate not only whether a college complies with the law, but more importantly, how the law is implemented on campus considering qualitative data such as is presented in this article.

Ideas of meritocracy and color-blind ideologies do little to confront the issues of race and equity on any campus, let alone at a Hispanic Serving Institution, such as Nepantla. While the campus student population was predominantly Latinx, the majority of the faculty and administration were white (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018a). Negative assumptions and limited ability to see student potential contradict the intent of the bill to close equity gaps. Research demonstrates that administration, faculty, and staff should reflect the student population and that faculty diversity plays a key role in countering ethnic and racial disparities in student degree completion (Boualoy Dayton et al., 2004).

Second order change,[14] like AB 705, requires change agents and the institution to evaluate values, culture, beliefs, and assumptions (Kezar, 2014). This led to a significant amount of emotional labor as indicated in the findings. Feelings of stress, frustration, confusion, and dissent were prevalent in participant responses. Emotional labor participants experienced could have been reduced with several actions by (a) providing further guidance on policies, expectations, and procedures, (b) increasing communication on shared governance practices, and (c) allowing additional time for sensemaking. Collaboration is important to ensure equity lies at the center of reform efforts.

Results of this study revealed positive implications attributed to prioritizing equity in institutional documents and removing institutional barriers. Conversely, the findings also exposed underlying problems of practice that persist in higher education.

## Recommendations

Mindsets influence the success of change initiatives (Kezar, 2014); therefore, change agents must take ownership for student success. Equally, institutional planning must prioritize student equity. To go deeper with Hispanic-Servingness as an institution, Hispanic-Serving Community Colleges need to intentionally close equity gaps, with disaggregated data, for their Latinx student populations. Community colleges are the most diverse system of higher education in the nation (American Association of Community Colleges, 2018). Change agents must establish alliances to cultivate inclusion, equity, and social justice to sustain transformational reform efforts. For instance, a promising example of this is the recent formation of the California Community College Equity Leadership Alliance, which creates partnerships among more than 60 community colleges to combat racism on campus (Weissman, 2020). Another promising example of leadership development is The Coalition's Aspiring Radical Leadership Institute (ARLI), which is a two-year professional development opportunity in California, designed with the goal of increasing faculty and staff diversity in the CCC system. The Coalition is made up of three higher educational organizations that decided to stand in solidarity in addressing conditions of inequity within the California Community College system. These organizations include the African American Male Education Network and Development (A2MEND), Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education (APAHE), and California Community College Organizacion de Latinx Empowerment Guidance & Advocacy for Success (COLEGAS). Per The Coalition's website (2022), "Institute participants are selected for demonstrating a passion for disrupting status quo structures that view structural racism as the central threat to the well-being of BIPOC faculty, staff, and students in the community college system."

In the same way, a culture of professional learning must be promoted in individual colleges as well as throughout the CCC system. Professional learning should focus on mandatory equity and diversity training and retraining, as well as building culturally relevant practices with regular and collaborative support networks. Some examples of professional learning that prioritizes equity are offered in different California Community Colleges are from CORA (Center for Organizational Responsibility and Advancement), Communities of Practice within the CCC System, and Humanizing Online Learning. Two major limitations of current professional development offerings in the CCCs are that they are typically only offered on a voluntary basis and campus stakeholders are not typically compensated for attending.

Other recommendations address hiring practices and campus responsibility to establish intentional institutional planning around equity. Hiring practices must prioritize the hiring of ethnically-diverse individuals with a record of proven commitment to social justice, equity, and inclusion efforts. Specific to faculty advancement, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work should be prioritized as a component of tenure and promotion consideration[15]. At the same time, campus equity plans (Integrated Plans) should be referenced by campus practitioners to have a better understanding of what student populations are being targeted for support and how programs and resources are being used to close equity gaps. Staff, faculty, and administrators must actively and regularly engage in implementing researched best practices to close equity gaps within their respective disciplines and support services.

Change initiatives need to be flexible enough to allow time for reflection and sensemaking to cultivate deep change (Kezar, 2014). Sensemaking is a way to change mindsets, which influence priorities, values, actions, commitments, and norms (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). If change agents do not feel included in reform efforts, then enduring transformational change is at risk. Essentially, all levels of change agents should reframe unequal outcomes so the focus is on analyzing how practices might be failing Latinx students. These practices can then be identified as problems of practice rather than problems of student deficiency (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015).

Education reforms like AB 705 are designed with the promise of increasing access and equity in an educational system that has historically had limited success in transfer and completion rates. Research that explores initiatives like these is integral for understanding how Latinx students and other underrepresented student populations can thrive in the community college system. A policy report on early implementers of AB 705 made recommendations for moving forward with compliance, including narrowing equity gaps as a critical component in the planning process (Rodríguez et al., 2018). The same report made recommendations for rigorous research to better comprehend the short and long-term impacts of AB 705 reform efforts, notably on underrepresented students (Rodríguez et al., 2018). Moreover, it is critical to conduct research on these reforms to better understand the ways that Latinx students experience and benefit from these efforts.

The AB 705 legislative mandate occurred prior to the coronavirus global pandemic. If research was important in understanding AB 705 implementation efforts and its implications for equity in Spring 2019, then there is an even greater need for research regarding how implementations have been adapted to support students in a mass emergency shift to online learning in response to the pandemic. The CCC Chancellor, Eloy Ortiz Oakley, endorsed the CCC system to continue offering online instruction through Fall 2020 (Zinshteyn, 2020), which continued into Spring 2021 as well. Students historically enrolled in developmental education courses, including academically underprepared students, low-income students, and Males of Color particularly have greater attrition rates in online education (Jaggars & Bailey, 2010; Xu & Jaggars, 2014). This invites additional research and action on how educational reform efforts are being affected by the pandemic; more work is needed to understand how wraparound services, like technology, food security, mental health services, and access to campus resources, are being impacted to ensure equity for students.

## Conclusion

This research represents a chance to prioritize social justice and equity efforts for the Latinx community. In closing, I learned that resistance endures as much as hope. Information and time for reflection are needed for change efforts. Implementation efforts must be guided by urgency; however, they must still allow for sensemaking. Efforts must prioritize the intricacies of relationships and recognize that change agents are people with emotions, hopes, and fears alike. We need more equity-minded change agents enacting and implementing educational system reforms; change agents who consider the type, context, agency, and approach to change (Kezar,

2014). Similarly, emotional labor is a dominant factor in the change process and must be considered to validate the people engaged in change efforts (Gonzalez et al., 2018). Most importantly, a shift in mindset and practice is imperative to complement the shift in policy to create greater equitable outcomes for Latinx students. Gloria Anzaldúa's words depict where we are as a nation; we are ready for change. Our future depends on it. Together, "*sí se puede, que así sea,* so be it, *estamos listas, vamonos*. Now let us shift" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 576).

**Notes**

[1] The term *community college* is used instead of two-year institution or two-year college as the CCC's Chancellor's Office Scorecard reports completion rates by six-year cohorts (Contreras & Contreras, 2018).

[2] According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), a Hispanic Serving Institution has enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent (FTE) students of which at least 25 percent are Hispanic.

[3] Developmental education is a term ascribed to students who enter college "underprepared" (Cohen et al., 2014).

[4] A CCC system adopted framework that redesigns a college's organization and culture to focus on access and success (Bailey et al., 2015).

[5] The Chancellor's Vision for Success outlines the CCC system goals and commitments for five years (to 2022). The goals include reducing equity gaps as well as regional achievement gaps, increasing transfer and completion rates, increasing the percent of CTE students who attain jobs in their field, and decreasing the average number of units accumulated by CCC students. Learn more at vision.foundationccc.org.

[6] The research site is Nepantla College (pseudonym). Nepantla is a Nahuatl word that represents the in-between (Anzaldúa, 2002). I use the term to highlight the college as a site of "liminal space where transformation can occur…nepantla indicates space/times of great confusion, anxiety, and loss of control…But nepantla is also a time of self-reflection, choice, and potential growth" (Keating, 2006, p. 8-9).

[7] Book incentives included *Teaching Men of Color in Community College: A Guidebook* by Frank Harris III, Luke Wood, and Khalid Akil White or *Supporting Men of Color in the Community College* by Luke Wood and Frank Harris III.

[8] See Hern and colleagues (2020) report, *Still Getting There: How California's AB 705 Is (and Is Not) Transforming Remediation and What Needs to Come Next* for further detail on system-wide implementation.

[9] ACCUPLACER is a computerized assessment developed by the College Board and commonly used by community colleges as the sole criteria for placement into math, English, and English as a Second Language courses.

[10] Early Alert is an Academic Advising and Planning Software by Starfish.

[11] On Course is a workshop consisting of learner-centered professional development designed to offer participants innovative strategies for empowering students to be active, responsible and successful learners (Nepantla College, n.d.).

[12] According to the WestEd website (2019), Reading Apprenticeship is a research-based teaching framework that helps college faculty increase contextualized, critical literacy skills and confidence for students.

[13] The Multiple Measures Assessment Project (MMAP), an effort to standardize assessment practices across the CCC system, was part of the Common Assessment Initiative (CAI) in the California Community Colleges.

[14] Second order change necessitates evaluation of underlying values, structures, processes, assumptions, and culture to institute change. For instance, those who implemented AB 705 at the research site were forced to examine their values related to who should have access to transfer-level English and Math courses.

[15] As the community colleges serve an increasingly diverse student population, it is fitting that faculty be held accountable in promotion and tenure to prioritize DEI work. See "The DEI Pathway to Promotion" by Colleen Flaherty for an example.

**REFERENCES**

AB 705, Irwin. Seymour-Campbell Student Success Act of 2012: matriculation: assessment, CA. Stat. § 745-78213 (Cal. 2017). https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB705

Abrica, E., & Rivas, M. (2017). Chicanas in IR: Data-driven advocacy for Latinx students from institutional research contexts in the community college. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, *11*(2), 43-64. https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.11.2.349

Acevedo-Gil, N. (2018). Latinas/os navigating the labyrinth: Persistence in community college developmental education. In A.J. de los Santos, L. I. Rendon, G. Francisco Keller, A. Acereda, E. Mara Bensimon, & R. J. Tannenbaum (Eds.) *New directions: Assessment and preparation of Hispanic college students* (pp. 179-200). Bilingual Press.

Acevedo-Gil, N., Santos, R., Alonso, L., & Solórzano, D. (2015). Latinas/os in community college developmental education: Increasing moments of academic and interpersonal validation. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *14*(2), 101-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192715572893

Acevedo-Gil, N., Santos, R., & Solórzano, D. (2014). Examining a rupture in the Latina/o college pipeline: Developmental education in California Community College system. *Perspectivas: Issues in Higher Education Practice and Policy, 3*, 1-20.

American Association of Community Colleges. (2018). Fast Facts 2018. https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018-Fast-Facts.pdf

Anzaldúa, G. (2002). Now let us shift...the path of conocimiento...inner work, public acts, In G. Anzalúa & A. Keating (Eds.), *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation*. Routledge.

Asera, R. (2019, April). *The power of middle leaders in California community colleges: Why now is the time to foster middle leadership.* The RP Group. https://rpgroup.org/Portals/0/Documents/Professional%20Development/LeadingFromtheMiddleAcademy/LFM-Power-of-Middle-Leaders-In-CCC.pdf?ver=2019-04-09-183418-

437

Baca, A. (2019). *"Now let us shift": A case study of developmental education reform in a Hispanic Serving community college* (Publication No. 850) [Doctoral dissertation, California State University, San Bernardino]. CSUSB ScholarWorks. https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/850/

Bahr, P., Fagioli, L., Hetts, J., Hayward, C., Willett, T., Lamoree, D., Newell, M., Sorey, K., & Baker, R. (2019). Improving placement accuracy in California's community colleges using multiple measures of high school achievement. *Community College Review, 47*(2), 178–211. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552119840705

Bailey, T., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clearer path to student success.* Harvard University Press.

Berkovich, I., & Eyal, O. (2015). Educational leaders and emotions: An international review of empirical evidence 1992–2012. *Review of Educational Research, 85*(1), 129-167.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2014). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Boualoy Dayton, N., Gonzalez-Vasquez, C. R., & Plum, C. (2004). Hispanic-serving institutions through the eyes of students and administrators. [Special Issue]. *New Directions for Student Services, 105*, 29-40. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.114

Brint, S., & Karabel, J. (1989). *The diverted dream: Community colleges and the promise of educational opportunity in America, 1900-1985*. Oxford University Press.

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2020a). *Key facts about California Community Colleges*. https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Key-Facts

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2020b). *2020 state of the system report*. https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Reports/2020-sosreport-070620-a11y.pdf?la=en&hash=E7E8D6627C736FD9981E0CDCFE0C234C57F899B4

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. (2021). *Update to the Vision for Success: Reaffirming Equity in a Time of Recovery.* https://www.cccco.edu/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Reports/vision-for-success-update-2021-a11y.pdf

California State Department of Education. (1960). *A master plan for higher education in California 1960-1975*. http://www.ucop.edu/acadinit/mastplan/MasterPlan1960.pdf

Callan, P. M. (2009). California higher education, the master plan, and the erosion of college opportunity. *National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education*.

Carrasquillo, C. A. (2013). *In their own words: High-achieving, low-income community college students talk about supports and obstacles to their success* (Publication No. b7761338) [Doctoral dissertation, UC San Diego]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2014). Contingent commitments: Bringing part-time faculty into focus. https://www.ccsse.org/docs/ptf_special_report.pdf

Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness. (2018, February). *Early findings from a national survey of developmental education practices.* https://postsecondaryreadiness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/early-findings-national-survey-developmental-education.pdf

Clark, B. R. (1960). The "cooling-out" function in higher education. *The American Journal of Sociology, 65*(6), 569-576.

Clark, B. R. (1980). The "cooling out" function revisited. *Questioning the Community College Role. New Directions for Community Colleges, Number 32, 8*(4), 15–32.

Cohen, B., Brawer, F. B., & Kisker, C. B. (2014). *The American community college* (6th ed.).

Jossey-Bass.
Conrad, C., & Gasman, M. (2015). *Educating a diverse nation: Lessons from Minority-Serving Institutions*. Harvard University Press.
Contreras, F. (2019). *Becoming "Latinx Responsive:" Raising institutional and systemic consciousness in California's HSIs*. American Council on Education. https://1xfsu31b52d33idlp13twtos-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Conteras-Essay_FINAL.pdf
Contreras, F., & Contreras, G. J. (2015). Raising the bar for Hispanic Serving Institutions: An analysis of college completion and success rates. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 14*(2), 151-170. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192715572892
Contreras, F., & Contreras, G. J. (2018). Latino community college students in California: Challenges and opportunities for leadership. In A. J. de los Santos, L. I. Rendon, G. Francisco Keller, A. Acereda, E. Mara Bensimon, & R. J. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *New directions: Assessment and preparation of Hispanic college students* (pp. 159-177). Bilingual Press.
Cox, R. D. (2009). *The college fear factor: How students and professors misunderstand one another*. Harvard University Press.
Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mix methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
Eckel, P., & Kezar, A. (2003). Key strategies for making new institutional sense: Ingredients to higher education transformation. *Higher Education Policy, 16*(1), 39-53.
Felix, E. R., & Fernandez Castro, M. (2018). Planning as strategy for improving Black and Latinx student equity: Lessons from nine California community colleges. *Education Policy AnalysisArchives, 26*(56). http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.26.3223
Fisk, G. M., & Friesen, J. P. (2012). Perceptions of leader emotion regulation and LMX as predictors of followers' job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly, 23*(1), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.11.001
Foundation for California Community Colleges. (2017). *Vision for success.* https://foundationccc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Vision/VisionForSuccess_web.pdf
Garcia, G. A. (2019). *Defining "servingness" at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Practical implications for HSI leaders*. American Council on Education. https://www.equityinhighered.org/resources/ideas-and-insights/defining-servingness-at-hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis-practical-implications-for-hsi-leaders/
Geiser, S., & Atkinson, R. C. (2010). *Beyond the master plan: The case for restructuring baccalaureate education in California.* Center for Studies in Higher Education.
Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Pearson.
Gonzales, L. D., Kanhai, D., & Hall, K. (2018). Reimagining organizational theory for the critical study of higher education. In M. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*: *Vol. 33*. (pp. 505-559). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72490-4_11
Gonzales, L. D., & Rincones, R. (2013). Using participatory action research and photo methods to explore higher education administration as an emotional endeavor. *The Qualitative Report, 18*(32), 1-17. http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol18/iss32/2
Henson, L., & Hern, K. (2014, November/December). *Let them in: Increasing access, completion, and equity in college English. The RP Group.*

https://rpgroup.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KZy1UoQuHrg%3d&portalid=0&timestamp=1477600054350

Hern, K., Snell, M., & Henson, L. (2020). *Still getting there: How California's AB 705 is (and is not) transforming remediation and what needs to come next*. Public Advocates. https://accelerationproject.org/Portals/0/Documents/Still_Getting_There_Final.pdf

Hern, K., & Snell, M. (2013). *Toward a vision of accelerated curriculum & pedagogy*. LearningWorks. http://www.learningworksca.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/AcceleratingCurriculum_508.pdf

Hochschild, A. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling.* University of California Press.

Hodara, M., Jaggars, S., & Karp, M. (2012). *Improving developmental education assessment and placement: Lessons from community colleges across the country.* Community College Research Center, Teacher's College, Columbia University. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/developmental-education-assessment-placement-scan.pdf

Hope, L. L., & Bruno, J. (2017, December 6). *AB 705 implementation and timeline*. https://www.mjc.edu/governance/curriculum/documents/ab705_implementation_memo.pdf

Hurtado, S., & Ruiz Alvarado, A. (2015). Realizing the potential of Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Multiple dimensions of organizational transformation. In A. M. Núñez, S. Hurtado, & E. Calderon Galdeano (Eds.), *Hispanic serving institutions: Advancing research and transformative practice* (pp. 25-46). Routledge.

Jaggars, S. S., & Bailey, T. (2010). *Effectiveness of fully online courses for college students: Response to a department of education meta-analysis*. Community College Research Center, Columbia University.

Jones, T. (2013). *Addressing a historical mission in a performance driven system: A case study of public historically Black university engaged in the equity scorecard process* (Publication No. 3609916) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

Jones, T., & Assalone, A. (2016). *Not just faster: Equity and learning centered developmental education strategies*. Southern Education Foundation. http://www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/c33a8962-f5a5-4112-989a-0199b59bd85f/Not-Just-Faster-Equity-Learning-Centered-Developme.aspx

Kezar, A. (2014). *How colleges change: Understanding, leading, and enacting change*. Routledge.

Malcom-Piqueux, L. E., & Bensimon, E. M. (2015, Spring). Design principles for equity and excellence at Hispanic-Serving Institutions. *Perspectivas: Issues in Higher Education Practice and Policy, 3*, 1-16.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Miller, K. (2001). The experience of emotion in the workplace: Professing in the midst of tragedy. *Management Communication Quarterly, 15*, 571-600. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318902154003

Murphy, J. T. (2013). The unheroic side of leadership. In M. Grogan, (Ed). *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (3rd edition) (pp. 28-39). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley &

Sons.
Núñez, A. M., Crisp, G., & Elizondo, D. (2015). Hispanic-Serving community colleges and their role in Hispanic transfer. In A. M. Núñez, S. Hurtado, & E. Calderón Galdeano (Eds.), *Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Advancing research and transformative practice* (pp. 47-64). Routledge.
Núñez, A. M., Sparks, P. J., & Hernández, E. A. (2011). Latino access to community colleges and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A national study. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 10*(1), 18-40. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192710391801
Osei-Kofi, N., & Rendon, L. (2005). Latinos, higher education, and the "needs" of the market. *Latino Studies, 3*, 249–260. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.lst.8600135
Pérez Huber, L., Malagon, M. C, Ramirez, B. R., Gonzalez, L. C., Jimenez, A., & Velez, V. N. (November 2015). *Still falling through the cracks: Revisiting the Latina/o education pipeline*. UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED574691.pdf
Public Policy Institute of California. (2016). *Higher education in California*. http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_0416HEBKR.pdf.
Public Policy Institute of California. (2017, October). Reforming math pathways at California's community colleges. https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/r_1017orr.pdf
Rodríguez, O. (2014). *Increasing access to college-level math: Early outcomes using the Virginia placement test.* (Brief No. 58). https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/increasing-access-to-college-level-math.pdf
Rodríguez, O., Cuellar Mejia, M., & Johnson, H. (2018, August). *Remedial education reforms at California's Community Colleges: Early evidence on placement and curricular reforms*. Public Policy Institute of California. http://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/remedial-education-reforms-at-californias-community-colleges-august-2018.pdf
Sáenz, V. B., & Swan, D. (2018). Latina/os and U.S. community colleges: A gateway to success. In A. J. de los Santos, L. I. Rendon, G. Francisco Keller, A. Acereda, E. Mara Bensimon, & R. J. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *Moving forward: Policies, planning, and promoting access of Hispanic college students* (pp. 228-248). Bilingual Press.
Salas, S. (2014). *Pipeline dreams: Latina/o community college students pushed out of the transfer path* (Publication No. 3708287) [Doctoral dissertation, California State University, San Bernardino]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.
Scott-Clayton, J., Crosta, P., & Belfield, C. (2014). Improving the targeting of treatment: Evidence from college remediation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 36*(3), 371–393. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373713517935
Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.
Suárez-Orozco, C., Casanova, S., Martin, M., Katsiaficas, D., Cuellar, V., Smith, N. A., & Dias, S. I. (2015). Toxic rain in class: Classroom interpersonal microaggressions. *Educational Researcher*, *44*(3), 151-161. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X15580314
The Campaign for College Opportunity. (2018a). *Left out: How exclusion in California's colleges and universities hurts our values, our students, and our economy.* https://files.acrobat.com/a/preview/da371fb2-ae1c-41ca-a126-7bbd4695696e
The Campaign for College Opportunity. (2018b). *The state of higher education for Latinx in California.* https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/State-ofHigher-Ed-

Latinx-Report-2018.pdf
Theoharis, G. (2008). “At every turn:” The resistance that principals face in their pursuit of equity and justice. *Journal of School Leadership, 18*, 303–343.
Townsend, B. K., & Twombly, S. (2007). Community college faculty: Overlooked and undervalued. *ASHE Higher Education Report, 32*(6), 1-163. https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.3206
Tracy, S. J. (2010, October 1). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10), 837-851.
U.S. Department of Education. (2018). Definition of Hispanic Serving Institution. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/idueshsi/definition.html
Weissman, S. (2020, June 11). More than 60 California community college presidents form alliance to actively combat campus racism. *Diverse Issues in Higher Education.* https://diverseeducation.com/article/180757/
Wood, L., & Harris, F. (2017). *Supporting men of color in the community college: A guidebook*. Montezuma Publishing.
Wood, L. (2019, November). Advancing Equity in Climates of Resistance [PowerPoint slides]. Middlesex Community College. https://mxcc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Wood_Symposium.pdf
Xu, D., & Jaggars, S. S. (2014). Performance gaps between online and face-to-face courses: Differences across types of students and academic subject areas. *Journal of Higher Education, 85*(5), 633–659. https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2014.0028
Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and method* (4th ed.). Sage.
Zinshteyn, M. (2020, May 18). *California community college chancellor endorses going online-only this fall*. Cal Matters. https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/2020/05/california-community-college-online-fall-2020/

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# SHALLOW INCLUSION: HOW LATINX STUDENTS EXPERIENCE A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION "DOING DIVERSITY WORK"

**Rosalie Rolón-Dow**
*University of Delaware*

**Rebecca Covarrubias**
*University of California, Santa Cruz*

**Carla Guerrón Montero**
*University of Delaware*

**AUTHOR NOTE**
We would like to thank the students, faculty and staff who were willing to participate in this study. Special thanks to the Center for the Study of Diversity at University of Delaware for their support of this research study and to Dr. James Jones, Trustees' Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Delaware, for his unwavering belief on the importance of this research. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Rosalie Rolón-Dow, 213 Willard Hall, Main St., Newark, DE, 19716 Email: rosa@udel.edu.

**ABSTRACT**

A university's culture cycle includes institutional *ideas* around racial/ethnic diversity that inform *institutional* practices and norms, which shape daily *interactions* and *individual* experiences of students. Using qualitative methods, we explore how Latinx students experience these elements of campus culture at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) publicly committing to engaging in diversity work. We examine the university's ideas and institutional practices and compare them with the interactions and individual experiences of students. We discuss what Latinx students' experiences reveal about how the university's culture cycle considers and promotes the inclusion of Latinx perspectives, experiences, cultural traditions, histories, and challenges. We supplement our understanding of the culture cycle model with elements of Latinx Critical Race Theory

(LatCrit) to account for the pervasive influence of race and racism. We conclude that a race-informed Latinx cultural consciousness is only present in shallow ways within the culture cycle of the university studied. To facilitate an understanding of Latinx student perspectives, meaningfully serve Latinx students, and extend the benefits of diversity to all students, a Latinx cultural consciousness must be infused in *all phases* of the culture cycle.

***Keywords***: Latinx students, culture cycle, institutional diversity, race, PWI

> *To be honest I don't see [diversity being promoted on campus], besides being involved in organizations…. I think the only way I see it from administration is through letters and emails, 'Oh, we're trying to diversify. Oh, we're trying this.' But I don't see much of the action* (Liana[1])

> *I guess at first what scared me was how is diversity going to be tackled? Is it just going to be increasing the populations? I don't want to say 'No, there's not enough,' because I see progression. I just hope that it continues to grow in the future* (Rafael)

## Introduction

Liana and Rafael recount their experiences as Latinx students at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) during a unique transitional period. Several years before they were interviewed, the university publicly announced that it was deepening its commitment to diversity. In its university blueprint, institutional stakeholders outlined the "value for diversity and inclusion" as a core belief that is essential to the pursuit of excellence and to the goal of educating global citizens. In juxtaposing this commitment with the experiences of Latinx students, our article explores how Latinx students perceive the campus climate for diversity and how the campus nurtures their development and engagement.

A focus on the experiences of Latinx students is timely given how this growing population continues to transform the cultural and linguistic tapestry of U.S. classrooms across the PK-16 spectrum (Irizarry, 2015; Marrun, 2020). Between 1976 and 2017 the percentage of enrolled college students who were Hispanic grew from 4% to 19% (NCES, 2018).

Yet, the demographics at most PWIs do not reflect this growth. This focus is also opportune given increased pressure (e.g., media focus on racialized campus incidents, student group demands, increased diversity metrics in university rankings) on universities to develop institutional initiatives that reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and student success (Lewis & Shah, 2019). Such initiatives do not always translate into meaningful change or equitable opportunities and outcomes. For example, Latinx students continue to experience structural challenges in universities, including confronting racism and a lack of representation of their histories and cultures, that undermine their likelihood of completing a 4-year degree relative to their White counterparts (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2016; Garcia, 2016; Harper, 2012; Sanchez, 2019).

In this article, we use a culture cycle model -- a framework that examines how culture and individuals mutually influence one another (Markus & Kitayama, 2010) -- to explore how Latinx students experience the cultural setting of a PWI publicly committing to diversity-related initiatives. In optimal circumstances, this framework assumes a dynamic process of influence, including the opportunity for Latinx students to agentically influence institutional practices and policies. Yet, cultural systems plagued by institutional barriers - like persistent racism - limit these opportunities. Thus, we supplement our understanding of the culture cycle model with elements of Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) to account for the pervasive influence of race and racism. A race-conscious culture cycle analysis helps us explore how Latinx students experience the climate for diversity at various levels of the culture cycle, including their places of influence; and helps us emphasize the role of race, which is often absent in cultural frameworks (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). We can also understand how race influences the cultural ideas, institutional practices, and daily interactions of a PWI committing to diversity and the psychological effects on students.

## Theoretical framework: A Race-conscious culture cycle

The culture cycle comprises four intertwined features: ideas, institutions, interactions, and individuals (Fryberg et al., 2016; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). In the *ideas* feature, we focus specifically on the prevalent beliefs around racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion, including how racial/ethnic identity differences should be integrated into the fabric of institutional life (see Jones, 2010). These beliefs also include viewpoints on the racial history of power and status and the tensions among racial/ethnic groups that have existed in the university's history (e.g., Plaut, 2010). These ideas are reflected and inscribed in *institutional* practices and policies (e.g., curricular and co-curricular offerings, hiring practices) that convey important messages about which students are being served, or not served, by the institution. These practices dictate the everyday socio-cultural exchanges and *interactions* of students with others, including faculty, staff, and other students. Finally, these interactions shape the *individual* psychological experiences of students at the university, including their sense of fit or thoughts about their capability in the university context.

Although some work considers questions of race and diversity using a culture cycle framework (e.g., Plaut, 2010), other perspectives offer more robust theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education, for example, is an interdisciplinary framework exploring the role of race/racism and the experiences of students across educational contexts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). LatCrit, a strand of CRT, brings attention to the intersectionality of race with other factors such as language, culture, immigration, citizenship status, intra-group diversity, and colonization that shape Latinx experiences (Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Háney-Lopez, 1998; Valdes, 1998). In our use of the culture cycle framework, LatCrit is necessary because it conceptualizes racism as an endemic, normalized feature in U.S. culture and institutions (Bell, 1993) and because it values and relies on the experiential knowledge - and resistance - of minoritized individuals and communities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As

scholars who approach educational and racial equity from anthropological and psychological frameworks, we were drawn to integrating both frameworks. To better understand this integration, we review existing research focused on how the different features of the culture cycle - ideas, institutions, and interactions - influence the psychological experiences of Latinx students.

**Cultural ideas: University diversity initiatives**

Many diversity planning initiatives are reactive in nature; they are initiated in response to national movements, legal demands, or disruptive campus incidents, such as hate-bias incidents, which highlight racism within the campus structure (Williams & Clowney, 2007). These diversity initiatives often produce superficial-level change (Williams & Clowney, 2007). For example, institutions invest in easy solutions for addressing diversity, outlining their ideas in a diversity mission statement (see Ahmed, 2012) or promoting an insubstantial commitment to multicultural centers and a diversity course requirement (Hikido & Murray, 2016). This investment is often done without careful thought about how to engage all students in meaningful interactions with diverse peers, also known as interactional diversity (Keels, 2020), with insufficient emphasis on shifting the campus cultural practices, or with insufficient resources devoted to diversity work.

These institutional initiatives may also address racial conflict and tension in superficial ways by minimizing conflict. Institutions might shift diversity-related policies and language to appear more seemingly race-inclusive but, in fact, might be more color-evasive[2] (see Cobham & Parker, 2007; Keels, 2020). Indeed, researchers have documented the prevalence of color-evasive racist ideologies in students' perceptions of diversity (Dingel & Sage, 2020; Hikido & Murray, 2016) and university diversity efforts (Cobham & Parker, 2007; Keels, 2020). For example, mission statements or welcome letters that celebrate "multiculturalism" without a critical lens on racism and diversity can render invisible the different experiences of racial/ethnic groups, including experiences with persisting structural barriers for racially minoritized students (see Forman, 2004; Plaut, 2010; Salter & Adams, 2013). Superficial attempts at celebrating diversity perpetuate invisibility and color-evasiveness and sustain white supremacy. They value sameness in opportunity and treatment of groups (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010) and are based on the idea that promoting assimilation into the dominant culture is desirable (Dingel & Sage, 2020). This is problematic as robust literature points to the negative effects of color-evasive approaches for both white (e.g., higher pro-white bias) and racially minoritized (e.g., lack of belonging) students (Aragón et al., 2017; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004).

Addressing the pervasive ways that white supremacy structures institutional culture is important if diversity initiatives are going to make systemic changes that move beyond the status quo to meaningfully serve racially minoritized students (Bensimon, 2018; Patton, 2016). Scholars argue that university diversity efforts that promote equity for racially minoritized populations must include both an understanding and valuing of differences among social identity groups (Aragón et al., 2017) and a focus on addressing structural inequality, racism, and white privilege within the institution (Dingel & Sage, 2020). Conceptual frameworks that appropriately serve Latinx students in higher education importantly address issues of diversity through a critical lens that includes a

race-forward agenda (Garcia, 2016; 2019; Hurtado, 1994; Kiyama et al., 2015; Museus, 2014). This is particularly important as, historically, institutions have not represented or integrated the histories and backgrounds of Latinx communities into their institutional structures (e.g., Hurtado, 1994; Kiyama et al., 2015) nor have they given sufficient attention to the ways racism has impacted the pursuit of higher education by Latinx people.

**Institutional practices and policies: How diversity initiatives are enacted**

To understand how ideas that undergird diversity initiatives impact the campus climate, scholars must examine elements of institutional culture. We focus on three such elements: structural diversity, curricular diversity, and co-curricular diversity. Structural diversity includes the numerical representation of minoritized people, including students, staff, and faculty, within an institution (Gurin et al., 2002). Structural diversity is one indicator of diversity initiative priorities as it showcases who an institution hires and retains among their faculty or who they enroll and serve among their student population. This is important because robust literature points to the benefits of attending an institution with a more diverse student and faculty population (Gurin, et al., 2002, Denson & Bowman, 2013). Yet, systems of higher education continue to lack critical representation of minoritized people, including those from Latinx backgrounds. Of all full-time faculty (e.g., tenure-track faculty, lecturers) in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, Latinx faculty only accounted for 4.76% in 2018 (NCES, 2018). This is disproportionately lower than the U.S. Latinx population (18.1%, United States Census, 2017) and the percentage of Latinx students (18.9%) enrolled in postsecondary institutions nationwide (NCES, 2018). Without appropriate representation, Latinx students can experience difficulty forging meaningful relationships with similar others, which undermines feelings of belonging and connection to campus (Hurtado, 1994; Strayhorn, 2012). Continued underrepresentation of Latinx faculty and students is evidence that diversity initiatives are not race-forward and are not sufficiently shifting the campus climate for diversity.

Another reflection of an institutional commitment to diversity is in the structure of curriculum offerings. Diversity or multicultural course requirements are now common in higher education; however, the menu of courses is often so broad that topics related to the racialization of groups, such as Latinx groups, are neutralized and given limited attention (Patton, 2016). Furthermore, diversity course requirements have not sufficiently impacted the broader curriculum where "whiteness remains embedded, regardless of subject matter" (Patton, 2016, p. 320). Ethnic studies courses, on the other hand, are more likely to benefit racially minoritized students because they center attention on racial projects, draw on the underutilized knowledge production of racially minoritized groups, expose minoritized students to their histories and provide access to a language of critique and possibility (de los Ríos et al., 2015). Low-income, first-generation Latinx college students reported a greater sense of belonging and intergroup understanding after taking a semester-long course focused on the histories and lived experiences of Latinx students (Nuñez, 201l; see also Keels, 2020).

Co-curricular offerings also reflect an institution's commitment to diversity. Latinx-centered student organizations play an important role in the experiences of many Latinx students, particularly in PWIs that may provide few opportunities for Latinx students to interact with each other (Ponjuán & Hernández, 2020) or to find spaces where their cultures and identities are centered or sustained (González, 2002). These organizations further the leadership development of Latinx students, as many tend to have missions that are rooted in community outreach, social change, and activism (Lozano, 2010). Interestingly, involvement in Latinx student organizations does not necessarily facilitate a sense of belonging at PWIs as students may participate in these organizations because of the marginality they feel in the broader university context (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

**The daily interactions and experiences of Latinx students at PWIs**

In shaping these structural elements of institutions, diversity initiatives also inform the daily interactions of Latinx students through both formal and informal interactional diversity. Formal interactional diversity includes intentional opportunities for students from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds to develop meaningful relationships, engage in open dialogue about race, or take courses that fulfill diversity requirements (Keels, 2020; Hurtado et al., 2008). Informal interactions are not planned but can happen within and between racial groups across all campus spaces (Hurtado et al., 2008). In general, positive cross-racial interactions are associated with growth in academic self-concept (Cuellar, 2014), sense of belonging (Nuñez, 2009), and critical perspectives on campus racial climate (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005). Conversely, negative cross-racial encounters, especially through microaggressions-- racialized everyday putdowns, insults, or indignities experienced by people of color (Pierce, 1970; Sue et al., 2007) -- can cause psychological distress (Sanchez et al., 2018), leave students feeling devalued, isolated, or invisible (Sanchez, 2019; Yosso et al., 2009), and negatively impact cultural and social adjustment (Von Robertson et al., 2016).

Latinx students cope with microaggressions and other forms of racism in a variety of ways including engagement in spaces that offer opportunities for positive intra-group interactions (Yosso et al., 2009). These spaces can help Latinx students navigate their institutions together (Von Robertson et al., 2016; Yosso et al., 2009), including learning how to resist racism (Villalpando, 2003; Yosso et al., 2009). With such intra-group support, Latinx students might be less likely to minimize the microaggressions they experience (see Sanchez, 2019) and more likely to perform better academically (Cerezo & Chang, 2013). Intragroup interactions, however, are not always positive for Latinx students. Conflicts may arise, for example, when essentialized notions about what it means to be Latinx are expressed and used to mark boundaries of belonging (Sanchez, 2019).

Prior research has examined how institutional diversity initiatives in both structural elements and interactions separately influence the socio-psychological experiences of Latinx students. Our goal is to examine these processes together using a race-conscious culture cycle analysis and to explore how Latinx students experience the campus climate for diversity at a PWI

publicly committing to diversity-related initiatives. We draw from interviews and focus groups with Latinx students as the primary data source; we also use selected statements from interviews with campus staff, faculty and administrators because they provide additional information on institutional history related to diversity efforts and racial dynamics.

## Method

### University Context

The study took place at State University (SU), a research-intensive public university in the Eastern United States. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the university at the time of the study was: 76% White, 6.9% Latinx, 4.7% Black, 4.2% Asian, 0.1% Native, 4.3% International, and 3.8% two or more races. As a PWI with a history of explicit racial exclusion before the Civil Rights Movement, past efforts related to diversity at SU mostly focused on redressing the institutional inequalities that resulted from denying Black students access to the university. Thus, over the decades, there were centers, curricula, and programming directly aimed at improving the inclusion of Black students. For instance, efforts by the Black community resulted in the formation of a cultural center, the Black Student Center (BSC), and a Black studies department. While issues pertinent to the Black community have by no means been resolved, this focus on the Black/White binary has historically dominated official discourses around race at SU. As a result, successive administrations have paid minimal explicit attention to the experiences of other racially minoritized groups such as the Latinx group and all its racial and ethnic complexity.

These historical trends were evidenced in the low scores SU received on diversity by an accreditation agency several years before the present study. The agency's report indicated that SU lagged behind its peers on absolute and relative measures pertaining to diversity. At the time of this study, SU had embarked on a university-wide campaign to address these dismal diversity measures. This included the crafting of a diversity mission statement and the creation of a task force responsible for defining the diversity concept, identifying the state of diversity efforts, and recommending policy changes. The administration also created a new office focused on diversity and provided limited diversity-related resources. Likewise, the SU's office of admissions was reconfigured to reach out to a more diverse student body in terms of race, ethnicity, and class.

### Research Positionality, Participants, & Procedure

The research team reflects multidisciplinary perspectives in education, psychology, and anthropology that guided their understanding and analysis of participants' responses. The three primary researchers are Latina professors, one was a postdoctoral fellow at the time of the study, whose research agendas reflect commitments to better understanding and improving the experiences of Latinx students in education. Students were recruited as part of a larger campus survey that our research team created and administered. All Latinx students, identified via institutional record data, on campus (N=1186) received an invitation. At the end of the survey, students indicated their interest in participating in student focus groups and interviews about "the experiences of Latino/a, Hispanic, or Latin American students at SU." These terms allowed for

broader identification with the study and, thus, for broader recruitment of a diverse sample of Latinx students. Once in the study, participants were encouraged to use their preferred racial/ethnic identity term; we provide this information in the results when offered.

Of all those who completed the survey, 25 participated in focus groups or interviews. We obtained demographic information from institutional records and students' self-reports on the survey. The majority of the sample was female (60%) and 28% were the first generation in their family to attend college. All years of school were represented: 35% were fourth-year students, 28% third-year, 20% second-year, and 16% first-year. Self-report data revealed that 60% of students identified as Latino/a or Hispanic, 16% specified an ethnic subgroup (1 Argentinian, 1 Guatemalan, 1 Cuban American, 1 Colombian), 12% identified as White and Latino/a or Hispanic (1 White/Ecuadorian, 1 White/Argentinian, 1 White/Venezuelan), 4% identified as Black/Latina/o, and 8% of participants did not report their identification. The sample also represented diversity in terms of their college major affiliation.

We held four 60-75-minute focus groups with enrolled Latinx students (N=13) and 45-75-minute individual interviews with students identified as Latinx student leaders (N=12).

The semi-structured format of the student interviews and focus groups allowed for consistency in topics but also for an opportunity to engage in comfortable yet flexible conversations (Wengraf, 2001). Interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. During these interviews, we asked open-ended questions about a) reasons for selecting SU; b) how they described their experiences as Latinx students at the institution; c) positive and challenging factors of being a Latinx student at SU; d) views of the contributions of Latinx students to the SU community; and e) opportunities for learning about Latinx-related topics.

We also conducted 14 individual interviews with administrators, faculty, and staff, recruiting those who were Latinx and worked directly with issues of equity and diversity or who worked directly with Latinx student organizations. These interviews, which provide secondary data in this article, focused on questions about a) the institution's history with diversity initiatives; b) work specifically addressing the needs of Latinx students; c) what administrators, faculty and staff learned from personal experiences working with Latinx students; and d) the ways they experienced the campus climate (especially those who were Latinx).

### *Coding Procedure*

We began coding with a data-driven, inductive coding approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research team read transcripts individually and then met to construct codes related to the research question, also known as open coding. We developed a coding dictionary and then coded and analyzed the data using Dedoose, a data analysis web-based program. The final coding scheme included 16 codes that addressed three main features of the data, including how students experienced being Latinx at SU, how they described SU more broadly, and how they described the Latinx community at SU. We then conducted a second reading of the data, reading by code instead of by transcript, and engaged in selective coding to identify the significant relationships and findings in our codes and categories. At this stage, we utilized the culture cycle framework to

provide an organizational structure for our codes. We constructed 5 main themes that reflected descriptions of *institutional* practices (i.e., structural diversity; (co-curricular diversity) and of daily *interactions* (i.e., opportunities for connection with Latinx people, encounters with non-Latinx others, responses to racist interactions). In our analysis, we noted how these features influenced participants' psychological experiences.

To enhance the trustworthiness of our data, we utilized two forms of triangulation. These included both investigator triangulation, where multiple investigators coded the data, and methodological triangulation, where we utilized multiple sources of information (Merriam, 1991). This included data from students, faculty, and staff and a comparison of our findings against our contextual analysis of SU's history and curricula. The team met regularly to discuss how our own subjectivities impacted our reading of the data, clarify and resolve any coding discrepancies between researchers, and explore relationships between codes. Specifically, we engaged in constant comparison of our interpretations of the data to our research question and relevant literature.

## Results

Applying a race-conscious culture cycle framework, we first focus on the institutional level and detail how Latinx students experience the institutional elements and structures of SU, including structural diversity and (co-)curricular diversity. We then focus on Latinx students' interactions at SU, including opportunities to connect with Latinx people, racist interactions with non-Latinx others, and students' responses to these limited and racist interactions. We embed students' descriptions of their socio-psychological experiences at SU in each of these discussions to highlight the influence of the levels of the culture cycle on students' belonging, well-being, and other psychological experiences. In each of these sections, we also feature statements from the faculty, staff, and administrator interviews; these data bolster the findings as they provide the perspectives of those who have non-student roles at the university.

### Structural diversity and Latinx students: "It's not known for being diverse"

At the time of the study, Latinx students at SU (6.9%)[3] were underrepresented when compared to the Latinx population of SU's state. Latinx students repeatedly addressed these structural diversity challenges, especially regarding visibility and underrepresentation. Enrique discussed the low percentage of Latinx students on campus, saying, "we're not a very visual part of campus." Briana, another student, expressed a similar statement saying that "we go unnoticed." The (in)visibility described by Latinx students may reference both their limited numbers on campus and the ways diverse phenotypes impacted how Latinx were identified by others. Raquel pointed out: "there is a lot of [Latino students] that you would not know are Latino because of the way they look, like some of us are lighter than others." As asserted by LatCrit scholars (Haney-López, 1998; Trucios-Haynes, 2000), phenotype intersects with national origin, accent, citizenship status, and other characteristics to shape individual level racial identity and the ways Latinx sub-groups (e.g., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc.) are racialized within the context of the narrow Black-

White binary. That is, the variety of Latinx phenotypes inform issues of visibility, including who is seen as Latinx.

The limited number of Latinx students and faculty discouraged some prospective students from attending SU. Marisol explained:

> A lot of my friends and my sister did not choose SU because of the lack of diversity; because there were not going to be a lot of Hispanics. It's not known for being diverse, at least in the people I keep talking to in the immediate areas [of our state] where you have the biggest concentration of Hispanics.

Diego noted the lack of representation of Latinx people in his major and explicitly linked this minimal presence to a larger institutional issue of diversity on campus:

> I know one of the things [the president] is big on is diversity. But how come I still see ... It's me and two other guys who are Latino in the whole college, at least in my major. If he's putting too much emphasis on diversity, why haven't we seen a number of Latino students ... For example, in the enrollment rates? Why hasn't that gone up?

Diego's response showcased how commitments to diversity without changes in structural diversity can have a superficial impact on the culture cycle of the university. Faculty offered a similar analysis about the importance of representation in doing meaningful diversity work. Elliot shared: "Frankly, I feel like if you're going to apply money to try to enhance diversity, the bottom line is trying to get more Hispanic faculty and students here… if you want to start changing culture… There's got to be some critical mass and I don't think we're there." Comments on SU's structural diversity highlight how SU was an overwhelmingly white campus both in terms of who it served and, as will be discussed next, in terms of what students experienced in the curricular and co-curricular structures of the university.

**Curricular and co-curricular diversity: "Where are things to unite Latino students?"**

With the exception of a few courses primarily discussing ethnicity, migration, and Latinx literature in departments such as Anthropology, Geography, Sociology, and Women and Gender Studies, there was not a Latinx studies department, program, certificate, or even a full course that addressed Latinx experiences in the United States. SU's Latin American Studies program and course offerings, although robust and diverse, are primarily centered on the history and cultures of peoples in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain. Some courses integrated material about these regions with the history of Latinx presence in the US. However, this was not central or visible in the mission or purpose of the program.

When asked about courses that offered Latinx-themed curricula, students and faculty mentioned only a few opportunities. Steven, a student, said, "I've taken the Spanish language course where we learned about language; the culture, the history and things like that are sidebars of the course." Some students hoped the university would offer opportunities for them to strengthen connections to their Latinx heritage and history. Alex, a student, mentioned that he

came to the university "wanting to learn more about [his] Puerto Rican/Latino heritage." Yet, he said that he did not find much in the curriculum about the experiences of Latinos:

> I did take an African-American studies class that dealt with discrimination and the criminal system and it did have a lot of similarities between Latinos and Blacks. But honestly, the library is probably the best thing [for information on Latinos] cause they have a whole section for just history, and then also the internet.

Beyond just a few references to courses or other types of academic experiences, students' conversations about opportunities to learn about Latinx content knowledge repeatedly focused on Registered Student Organizations (RSOs). Rafael explained:

> I would say MGC (Multicultural Greek Congress), Unidad Latina and La Raza, that's the Latino community that I think of on campus because that's what I see most advocating for the Latino community.

Marisol mentioned that she only saw the Latinx community in the RSOs. She shared, "I was amazed that there were so many Hispanics in one place. I had no idea. There were like 30 or something." Lysandra, who was a staff member, an SU alum, and an advisor for one of the Latinx RSOs, also identified RSOs as the primary place for the Latinx community, even for faculty and staff, "In terms of a Latino community, I don't feel like there's any organized home away from home for us. Basically, the Latino community to me is just Unidad Latina and La Raza."

The RSOs served different functions for students including allowing students to feel a sense of pride, belonging, unity, and strength as members of a Latinx community. Alex commented, "I go to these meetings of the student organizations and just seeing the pride that the Latinos have on this campus, you can't really shoot that down at all." Liana explained that Unidad Latina was where she made her close group of friends and where she wanted to be involved because, "I instantly felt connected to the people there, I felt it was like my home."

RSOs also educated others on campus about Latinx life and cultural practices. Eva explained the multiple goals of Unidad Latina. "They try to bring everyone together, not just Hispanic people, because they will have events that everyone can attend. So I think [we are] trying to promote the culture not just within the group but to everyone." According to Paloma, a faculty member, the focus on Latinx culture was important but superficial: "I know that there are organizations that focus on Latino issues [but] for the most part they tend to be stereotypical. They talk about the 'lite' cultural aspects of the Latino culture; about the food, the music but I don't see anything political". The feeling of superficial programming was also observed in opportunities related to Latinx Heritage Month. Robert, a staff member, explained, " being Latino is an everyday experience. It's not only designed for one month. It shouldn't be our only source of [Latinx] diversity on campus." Students and faculty yearned for both broader university participation at these events and for the inclusion of Latinx speakers, events, or concerns into other aspects of university life.

Participants also repeatedly noted that there was no physical space designated for Latinx students or a place to serve as a resource for connecting with surrounding Latinx organizations or communities. The staff at the BSC referred to intentional outreach efforts to the Latinx community

as part of their purpose on campus. Yet, the majority of Latinx participants described this space as primarily serving Black students and not as a place that nurtured belonging for Latinx students. This may be, in part, a function of anti-Black racism, which can be expressed within Latinx communities as a rejection of Blackness as a cultural marker (Deche et al., 2019). Rafael, a student who used the BSC, explained:

> I definitely do think the BSC is a very large support system [but] I never see Latino students there. I guess because… many students feel they can't go in there. I think just because of the name, people shy away from it.

Raquel, a student, hoped that what BSC offered to the Black community could also be offered to Latinx students, "Just thinking of what the BSC does, where are things like that to unite Latino students, to just get them to know each other and have them form a community [or] just to make their presence known?"

In the absence of physical or academic spaces to address the experiences of Latinx populations, the expression and development of relevant learning opportunities remained largely dependent on Latinx students themselves. This left students and faculty feeling skeptical about the university's commitment to institutional change. All the faculty and staff interviewed expressed that the university's efforts insufficiently addressed the core of institutional life. Natalie, a staff member, stated, "I think many people see it as a to-do. We did diversity. But it's not something that you can just do, it's who you become. It's what your institution values. It's the core of it, and I just don't see it here. I think if I don't see it, how are students really seeing it?" Elliot, a faculty member, who was invited to participate in a task force report, mentioned that the university remained largely the same,

> I was initially cautiously optimistic when the new president came and he seemed to proactively want to create this diversity task force and it seemed to be a principle of his strategic plan. He was talking the right talk, but then it felt like all of the work that went into getting all of the information that was needed to create that diversity task force report wasn't really used. It was superficially used.

In sum, SU lacked a strong emphasis on the integration of Latinx students, their cultures, histories, and concerns throughout the institutional level of the culture cycle of SU. Although institutional practices importantly determine the interactions and individual-level experiences students confront, a culture cycle framework acknowledges how these levels can both reflect and counter such institutional patterns. For example, further examining issues of diversity within interactions reveals how institutional agents - like faculty, staff, and students - experience a shallow attempt at diversity but also how they themselves engage in meaningful resistance to address these disconnects.

**Intragroup interactions at SU: "It's really hard for Latinos to network"**

Students shared a number of ways in which they felt challenged by the opportunities (or lack thereof) for building relationships with other Latinx students and the psychological impact of these experiences. One challenge was the limited options for meeting other Latinx students. As

Miguel noted, “I have a hard time meeting [other Latino] people because the campus is so big and … [Latinos are] spread out.” Xiomara experienced a similar challenge,

> I came to SU and I was the only Latina on my floor, in my building. It wasn't something that I thought would bother me, but it did. It did take getting used to, especially [my] freshman year. I’m getting used to everything to begin with and then on top of that, I have to get used to not knowing... anyone who shares your ethnic perspective.

Without opportunities to interact with Latinx peers, some students felt isolated or misunderstood. For Alex, this was especially felt in his courses, “there's not too many kids that I talk to during class or have anything to talk about. It’s really hard for Latinos to network, especially if they want to identify with somebody that they can relate to as much as possible.” When asked how he felt being at SU, he shared, “I would kind of say like, isolated honestly.” Sofia, noting a similar challenge, shared that it would have been “a little easier to transition into college if there were more diversity, of even ideas and backgrounds.”

Students also spoke about the challenge of finding or expressing their Latinx identities in the context of a culturally white campus that also attracts many students from middle-to-upper-class backgrounds. Because of the range of ways that students identified racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically, interactions between Latinx students did not always nurture a sense of shared experience. This was evident in one focus group of three Latina students:

> Gloria: I think that college is... like trying to really find an identity, but it is harder as a Latino. There are obviously people who are "Americanized" and aren't with their cultures. They don't celebrate it. With me, it's no shame, but it might be different with another person, that they'd rather just kind of shy away from that just because it is a minority [at SU]
>
> Estela: I feel like a lot of people say they're Latino, but they're mixed. They don't have our culture, so they don't count.
>
> Heather: It's not like you're interacting with someone that's Latino and can talk to you about that kind of stuff, because you have your culture, and they're more Americanized, I guess.

Although they sometimes essentialized Latinx identities, their conversation illustrated the complexity of negotiating one’s Latinx identity in a predominantly white space and the consequences this had on intra-group interactions.

While these students primarily focused on cultural differences, diversity within the Latinx population in terms of racial identity also influenced intra-group interactions. Rafael, who spoke of his family as Afro-Latino, saw a lot of similarities in the struggles experienced by African Americans and Latinx communities and helped organize a campus Afro-Latino event. But he was frustrated by the limited number of Latinx students who were involved in such events on campus and implicated both racial and cultural differences within the Latinx population in this challenge.

> You're telling me that the Latino population is increasing but I don't see these faces.
>
> Maybe it's someone that's on paper putting Latino but they don't necessarily identify

> with the culture. Even if I were to hang out on Main Street on the weekend and they see me and they ask, "Oh, what are you?" and I say, "I'm Puerto Rican." They're like, "Oh, I'm half Puerto Rican." But you would never be able to tell because they don't vocalize it as much or necessarily identify with the culture. They don't identify because they don't know much of the culture because they weren't brought up with it.

Indeed, some of the students we interviewed mentioned that they had grown up in predominantly white environments and were used to and comfortable interacting with white peers. Heather, a student, explained:

> I noticed here that it's predominantly Caucasian. But I also lived in an area that was predominantly Caucasian already, so it wasn't like a huge culture shock for me. I guess I got so used to being the minority that it would be natural to be in the minority again.

Other social identities influenced intra-group relationships for Latinx students. Javier highlighted issues of intersectionality when he spoke of his experiences as a Latinx, first-generation student. He described that a challenge for him was "finding people that actually understand what you're going through as a Latino student. My parents don't know much about college so it was hard to find people who knew what you were talking about." This sentiment was expressed by other first-generation Latinx students in our focus groups.

LatCrit's focus on intersectionality illuminates some of the challenges that SU Latinx students face in building intra-group interactions, and how their challenges are exacerbated by the underrepresentation of Latinx students at SU. Insights from LatCrit theory reveal how hierarchies of racial identity impact Latinx populations at SU, privileging and rewarding White identification and previous experiences in white contexts (Haney-López, 1998; Trucios-Haynes, 2000). Furthermore, a LatCrit analysis helps us understand this quality of the Latinx experience at SU as a manifestation of racism within the institution's culture cycle.

**Intergroup interactions and microaggressions: "What's wrong with being Hispanic?"**

The minimal representation of Latinx students on campus also complicated interactions with non-Latinx students. Eva, a student, explained that non-Latinx students often had limited opportunities for building relationships with Latinx people both before they arrived on campus and on the campus itself. She stated, "If students are not used to interacting with other Hispanic people they're not really going to get to know them." Consequently, without "getting to know" Latinx students through in-person encounters or classroom curriculum, Latinx students confronted problematic interactions with non-Latinx students at SU. Stories of microaggressions and racial stress emerged as students spoke of their campus lived experiences. Lucas, a student, shared,

> I feel like people kind of look at me differently just because the color of my skin….
> I feel like I don't fit in. There's always that percentage that stereotypes you, they have a typical view of Hispanics so they either put you aside or just overlook you

> in general…. I didn't feel they thought I was equal to them in any way. In class I felt if I answer a question, they'll look at me some type of way.

Diego noted the same "weirdness" in classes. He explained, "There is a lot of stereotyping. I get that a lot from students. When I'm with some of my buddies, I am always getting Mexican jokes and stuff." Roxanna also described her frustrations with a hurtful interaction with close friends:

> I was walking with two of my friends and they both happen to be from one of the wealthier parts of Logan town, [which is] predominately White. One of my friends was interested in this kid named Victor. The other girl that was with us hadn't heard anything about Victor yet and she was like, "Oh who's Victor?" The other one says, "Oh I swear he's not Hispanic." So, I said, "what's wrong with being Hispanic? The girl who was interested in this Victor guy [said], "Oh no, I didn't mean anything by it." And the other one said, "she meant like Mexican." It's awkward, it's two of my close friends and I was taken aback. Just things like that [happen] where people just haven't been exposed to Latinos before and they're not being exposed to it here so they just continue with a narrow-minded path.

Latinx students confronted hurtful, racist interactions even in close friendships with non-Latinx students. Jessica, a student, who confronted stereotypes of being a "sassy, sexy Hispanic woman" explained, "I think a lot of it is that most of the contact the students here have with Hispanics is through the TV. It's not so much with real-life students." The stereotypes that Jessica and other Latinx students described reveal that the complexity and nuance of Latinx lived experiences often remains unnoticed or misunderstood at SU. Although SU is committed to a "zero tolerance policy" on racial bigotry and harassment, the racial microaggressions described by Latinx students serve to maintain racism as a normalized feature (Bell, 1993) of institutional life. Using a LatCrit lens, we identified how race-based microaggressions in daily interactions challenge ideologies of an objective, inclusive diversity climate that provides mutually beneficial experiences and opportunities for all students.

**Latinx students as cultural ambassadors: "I kind of blow it off and then sort of teach them"**

Some Latinx students sought to combat microaggressions or their classmates' limited experiences engaging with Latinx individuals and communities by assuming the role of cultural ambassadors. In this role, Latinx students taught other students about Latinx identities and cultural practices or they countered faulty assumptions embedded in stereotypes and microaggressions. Sofia explained that "in classes, if there's anything pertaining to Latinx culture or traditions or history, if it's not correct, I feel the responsibility to kind of set things straight." Raquel played Latinx music in her residence hall and responded to classmates' requests to teach them how to dance. Marisol educated others about her cultural practices and, at the same time, countered stereotypes and unconscious biases about Latinx life:

> Everybody thinks everybody's Mexican and that you like spicy food. What I do now is, I kind of blow it off and then sort of teach them. It's a moment for education.

> No, I don't eat this, or I am a little bit like this, let me tell you more about that. I think people start thinking a certain way about you, unconscious bias is what you call it, which is sad but very real. You try to cope with it, try to be as positive as possible.

Like Marisol, other Latinx students expressed mixed feelings towards their roles as cultural ambassadors. Although students often mentioned that they appreciated their classmates' curiosity or attempts at better understanding Latinx cultural practices, they also found it frustrating to try to bridge the gap between their classmates' (or faculty's) level of understanding and their own lived experiences as Latinx students. Marlene, a student, explained:

> I guess it's hard because they can't understand, because they're not in that place. It's completely fine that they don't understand because it's not their fault, but it's sometimes frustrating to try to explain and you just get impatient. Well, not impatient, but frustrated, because you want them to understand where you're coming from.

Latinx students did not always frame these interactions as examples of racism, but they noted that their role as cultural ambassadors was taxing and that they were tired of interpreting whether interest in them was genuine or superficial. For example, Rafael, who reframed the stares he received as "positive" attention, also noted how these stares drained his energy as he felt he was working to "prove" his merit and belonging at SU:

> [There's] frustration of constantly seeing how people from my city[4] are looked at negatively or the stereotypes that exist for Latino culture on campus and just seeing how differently they may perceive me. I'm in business school. I'm a Latino male, I have long hair. I don't look like your typical business student. I feel like it draws attention in a good way rather than me conforming to what people are used to. You didn't expect that from me and now I showed you that I did it just as good.

Rafael's story, like the stories of several other students, illustrated how his role as a cultural ambassador arose in direct response to the stress that came from different manifestations of racism rather than out of a desire to play this role. He shared,

> I remember sitting in a class one time just listening to two students talking about the business district in my city. They were saying, "Yeah you have all these corporate offices and buildings but then they're surrounded by the slums." These things happened my freshman year and I think it just got to a point where, in my college career I stopped listening and started saying something.

Still, other students expressed that they did not always know how to respond. After describing a microaggression involving a professor's statement that Latinx people were "good at cutting our grass," Raquel said, "I didn't know what to do with that." In general, while the students talked about positive aspects of their interactions at SU, when they talked specifically about how being Latinx impacted their experiences, they had some critiques or suggestions to offer about how interactions at SU could be less racist or more positive and fulfilling for them as Latinx students.

## Conclusions

A race-conscious culture cycle approach shed light on Latinx students' experiences at a PWI engaged in diversity work. Despite a public commitment to diversity and inclusion, including efforts to fund diversity-related initiatives (e.g., creation of a diversity center), our findings reveal that these attempts are shallow. That is, SU's commitment to diversity has not meaningfully included a Latinx cultural consciousness at varying levels of the culture cycle. At the *institutional* level, we illustrated the absence of substantial and intentional institutional structures and practices for nurturing Latinx identity and culture across multiple facets of students' experiences, including SU's structural diversity and curriculum offerings. In their *interactions*, Latinx students experienced intra- and inter-group challenges related to the lack of representation of Latinx people and knowledge, including not being able to find other Latinx students to connect with, confronting race-related microaggressions, and serving as cultural ambassadors by teaching non-Latinx students about their culture. Through these experiences, they noted feelings of isolation and disconnect as students at SU.

There are some limitations to this conclusion. First, in examining the culture cycle of SU, we included perspectives of faculty, staff, and students. Yet, the perspectives of higher-level campus leaders and administrators (e.g., university president, deans) who make consequential decisions about diversity on campus are absent. Other work has included these perspectives and noted similar shallow, color-evasive ideas regarding diversity (see Ahmed, 2012), but tying these with other levels allows a fuller picture of an institution's culture cycle. Second, while we explored differences among our students in terms of ethnic background and in the different ways they experienced racialization, these intra-group differences were not centered in our study design. Latinx higher education scholarship needs to include further attention on Latinx sub-groups and needs to study anti-Black racism within university Latinx communities (Dache et al., 2019). Third, we interviewed students several years after the public commitment to diversity, which might not be sufficient time for meaningful institutional change. Future work should engage longitudinal approaches to understand how students experience diversity initiatives at the onset of the commitment and years later. Nonetheless, scarce research does note that such change is not substantial over time (see Dingel & Sage, 2020).

A Latinx cultural consciousness - a deliberate and race-informed awareness of the needs, values, and intellectual contributions of Latinx peoples - is useful for informing an institution's *ideas* about how diversity initiatives best serve racially minoritized students. Scholars have theorized and documented how higher education institutions--particularly Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)--develop an organizational identity that appropriately serves, and not simply enrolls, Latinx students (see Garcia, 2016). While HSIs serve larger numbers of Latinx students (at least 25% of the student population is Latinx) than PWIs like SU (where approximately 7% is Latinx), the continuous growth of Latinx students at SU, and other PWIs like it, warrant intentional learning from existing funds of knowledge of HSIs. There are concrete, diverse examples of how to serve Latinx students in meaningful ways (see Garcia, 2020).

Linking a model of servingness within a culture cycle framework, we argue that a meaningful commitment to Latinx consciousness should foster *institutional* practices that pay attention to structural diversity and the ways in which Latinx perspectives and content knowledge are integrated into the cultural practices, policies, and curriculum. For example, institutions must hire and recruit more Latinx people, increase the number of Latinx studies courses, and transform existing curricula to be more inclusive of Latinx and anti-racist content (e.g., Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015; González, 2002). A campus that serves Latinx students also encourages *interactions* and connections with Latinx communities both within and outside the campus and facilitates Latinx-centered community building. Campus professionals should work to provide resources for the establishment or maintenance of Latinx peer communities as a way to promote cultural validation and bolster Latinx students' social capital for navigating PWIs (e.g., Cerezo & Chang, 2013). This work must guide Latinx campus groups in addressing anti-Blackness within the Latinx community. Institutional commitments must also address intergroup racist encounters students face or the added responsibilities placed upon them, such as the role of cultural ambassador, in resisting such racism. Without meaningful responses, institutions will continue to rely on the labor of students to engage in meaningful diversity work for change, which comes with high emotional and academic costs for students (see racialized equity labor, Lerma et al., 2020).

In centering Latinx perspectives in our study of SU's culture cycle, we both contribute to theory and draw conclusions about meaningful diversity work. Using a LatCrit lens, we adopt a more critical view of the role of race and racism in the experiences of Latinx students, specifically, within the levels of the culture cycle. Merging LatCrit with a cultural framework uniquely sheds light on the racialized experiences of Latinx students at a PWI - with historical and cultural tensions grounded in a White/Black binary - engaging in diversity work. In addressing race and racism, we highlight points of disruption along a culture cycle process. Addressing these disruptions requires more than shallow attempts but rather a deep commitment to analyze and disrupt racist cultural and foundational ideas, institutional practices, and daily interactions that thwart opportunities for Latinx students, faculty, and staff to thrive and for educational equity to be achieved.

**Notes**

[1] All participant names are pseudonyms.

[2] Although the term color-blind is more widely used, the term color-evasive does not position people with disabilities as problematic and addresses the purposeful, as opposed to passive, ways race is avoided (see Annamma et al., 2017).

[3] Over half of the SU Latinx students were out of state students, making the underrepresentation of in-state Latinx students starker.

[4] Rafael came from the city nearest to the campus.

**REFERENCES**

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822395324

Annamma, S. A., Jackson, D. D., & Morrison, D. (2017). Conceptualizing color-evasiveness: Using dis/ability critical race theory to expand a color-blind racial ideology in education and society. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *20*(2), 147-162. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2016.1248837

Aragón, O. R., Dovidio, J. F., & Graham, M. J. (2017). Colorblind and multicultural ideologies are associated with faculty adoption of inclusive teaching practices. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 10*(3), 201–215. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000026

Bell, D. (1993). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Basic Books.

Bell, J. M., & Hartmann, D. (2007). Diversity in everyday discourse: The cultural ambiguities and consequences of "happy talk". *American Sociological Review*, *72*(6), 895-914. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200603

Bensimon, E.M. (2018). Reclaiming racial justice in equity. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *50*(3-4), 95-98. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2018.1509623

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Cerezo, A. & Chang, T. (2013). Latina/o achievement at predominantly White universities. The Importance of culture and ethnic community. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 12(1), 72-85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192712465626

Cobham, B. A., & Parker, T. L. (2007). Resituating race into the movement toward multiculturalism and social justice. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2007*(120), 85-93. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.260

Cuellar, M. (2014). The impact of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), emerging HSIs, and non-HSIs on Latina/o academic self-concept. *The Review of Higher Education*, *37*(4), 499-530. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2014.0032

Cuellar, M., & Johnson-Ahorlu, R. N. (2016). Examining the complexity of the campus racial climate at a Hispanic serving community college. *Community College Review*, *44*(2), 135–152. https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552116632584

Dache, A., Haywood, J. M., & Mislán, C. (2019). A badge of honor not shame: An AfroLatina theory of Black-imiento for US Higher Education Research. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *88*(2), 130-145. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.88.2.0130

Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative inquiry*, *8*(1), 105-126. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800107

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1ggjjn3

Denson, N., & Bowman, N. (2013). University diversity and preparation for a global society: The role of diversity in shaping intergroup attitudes and civic outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(4), 555-570. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.584971

Dingel, M. J., & Sage, S. K. (2020). Undergraduate students' perceptions of diversity over time. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *13*(2), 120-132.

https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000119

Espinoza, L., & Harris, A. P. (1997). Afterword: Embracing the tar-baby. LatCrit Theory and the sticky mess of race. *California Law Review*, 1585-1645. https://doi.org/10.2307/3481066

Forman, T. (2004). Color-blind racism and racial indifference: The role of racial apathy in facilitating enduring inequalities. In M. Krysan, & A.E. Lewis, A. E. (Eds.), *The changing terrain of race and ethnicity* (pp. 43–66). Russell Sage Foundation.

Fryberg, S., Covarrubias, R., & Burack, J. A. (2016). The ongoing psychological colonization of North American Indigenous people: Using social psychological theories to promote social justice. In P. L. Hammack (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Psychology and Social Justice* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.

Garcia, G. A., & Okhidoi, O. (2015). Culturally relevant practices that "serve" students at a Hispanic Serving Institution. *Innovative Higher Education*, *40*(4), 345-357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-015-9318-7

Garcia, G. A. (2016). Complicating a Latina/o-serving Identity at a Hispanic Serving Institution. *The Review of Higher Education*, *40*(1), 117-143. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2016.0040

Garcia, G. A. (2019). *Defining "servingness" at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Practical implications for HSI leaders* (pp. 1-8). American Council on Education.

Garcia, G. A. (2020). *Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Practice: Defining "Servingness" at HSIs*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

González, K. P. (2002). Campus culture and the experiences of Chicano students in a predominantly White university. *Urban Education*, *37*(2), 193-218. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085902372003

Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, *72*(3), 330-367. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.72.3.01151786u134n051

Haney López, I. F. (1998). Race, ethnicity, erasure: The salience of race to LatCrit theory. *La Raza LJ*, *10*, 57. https://doi.org/10.2307/3481058

Harper, S. R. (2012). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *The Review of Higher Education*, *36*(1), 9–29. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0047

Hikido, A., & Murray, S. B. (2016). Whitened rainbows: How White college students protect whiteness through diversity discourses. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *19*(2), 389-411. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2015.1025736

Hurtado, S. (1994). The institutional climate for talented Latino students. *Research in Higher Education*, *35*(1), 21-41. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02496660

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 324-345. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270

Hurtado, S., Griffin, K. A., Arellano, L., & Cuellar, M. (2008). Assessing the value of climate assessments: Progress and future directions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*,

*1*(4), 204. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014009

Hurtado, S., & Ponjuán, L. (2005). Latino educational outcomes and the campus climate. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *4*(3), 235-251. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192705276548

Irizarry, J. (2015). *Latinization of US schools: Successful teaching and learning in shifting cultural contexts*. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315633763

Jones, J. M. (2010). Toward a diversity science: The longest journey begins with the first step. *Psychological Inquiry*, *21*(2), 127–133. https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840x.2010.487252

Keels, M. (2020). *Campus Counterspaces: Black and Latinx Students' Search for Community at Historically White Universities*. Cornell University Press. https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501746895

Kiyama, J. M., Museus, S. D., & Vega, B. E. (2015). Cultivating campus environments to maximize success among Latino and Latina college students. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2015*(172), 29–38. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20150

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers college record*, *97*(1), 47-68.

Lerma, V., Hamilton, L. T., & Nielsen, K. (2020). Racialized equity labor, university appropriation and student resistance. *Social Problems*, *67*(2), 286-303. https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spz011

Lewis, K. R., & Shah, P. P. (2019). Black students' narratives of diversity and inclusion initiatives and the campus racial climate: An interest-convergence analysis. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000147

Lozano, A. (2010). Latina/o culture centers: Providing a sense of belonging and promoting student success. In L.D. Patton, (Ed.), *Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory and Practice* (pp. 3-25). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (2010). Cultures and selves: A cycle of mutual constitution. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *5*(4), 420-430. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610375557

Marrun, N. A. (2020) "My mom seems to have a dicho for everything!": Family engagement in the college success of Latina/o students. *Journal of Latinos and Educatio*n, 19(2), 164-180. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2018.1489811

Merriam, S. B. (1991). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Museus, S. D. (2014). The culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) model: A new theory of college success among racially diverse college student populations. In M.B. Paulsen (Ed.) *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 189-227). Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8005-6_5

National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Digest of education statistics: Postsecondary education*. Retrieved June 30, 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/2018menu_tables.asp

Nuñez, A. M. (2009). A critical paradox? Predictors of Latino students' sense of belonging in

college. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *2*(1), 46. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014099

Nuñez, A.-M. (2011). Counterspaces and connections in college transitions: First-generation Latino students' perspectives on Chicano studies. *Journal of College Student Development*, *52*(6), 639–655. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2011.0077

Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher education. *Urban Education*, *51*(3), 315-342. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915602542

Pierce, C. (1970). Offensive mechanisms. In *The Black Seventies*, ed. F.B. Barbour, 265-282. Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher.

Plaut, V. C. (2010). Diversity science: Why and how difference makes a difference. *Psychological Inquiry*, 21(2), 77-99. https://doi.org/10.1080/10478401003676501

Ponjuán, L., & Hernández, S. (2020). Different yet similar: The Educational experiences of Latinx male students at Texas PWI, HSI, and HBCU Institutions. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192719896330

Richeson, J. A., & Nussbaum, R. J. (2004). The impact of multiculturalism versus color blindness on racial bias. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *40*(3), 417–423. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2003.09.002

Rosenthal, L., & Levy, S. R. (2010). The colorblind, multicultural, and polycultural ideological approaches to improving intergroup attitudes and relations. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *4*(1), 215-246. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-2409.2010.01022.x

Salter, P., & Adams, G. (2013). Toward a critical race psychology. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *7*(11), 781–793. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12068

Sanchez, D., Adams, W. N., Arango, S. C., & Flannigan, A. E. (2018). Racial-ethnic microaggressions, coping strategies, and mental health in Asian American and Latinx American college students: A mediation model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *65*(2), 214–225. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000249

Sanchez, M. E. (2019). Perceptions of campus climate and experiences of racial microaggressions for Latinos at Hispanic-serving institutions. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *18*(3), 240-253. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717739351

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative inquiry*, *8*(1), 23-44. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students.* New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203118924

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, *62*(4), 271–286. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.62.4.271

Trucios-Haynes, E. (2000). Why race matters: LatCrit theory and Latina/o racial identity. *Berkeley La Raza LJ*, *12*, 1.

United States Census. (2017). *Hispanic Population to Reach 111 Million by 2060*. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2018/comm/hispanic-projected-pop.html

Valdes, F. (1998). Theorizing OutCrit Theories: Coalitional Method and Comparative Jurisprudential Experience-RaceCrits, QueerCrits and LatCrits. *U. Miami L. Rev.*, *53*, 1265-1322.

Villalpando, O. (2003). Self-segregation or self-preservation? A critical race theory and Latina/o critical theory analysis of a study of Chicana/o college students. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, *16*(5), 619-646. https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000142922

Von Robertson, R., Bravo, A., & Chaney, C. (2016). Racism and the experiences of Latina/o college students at a PWI (predominantly White institution). *Critical Sociology*, *42*(4-5), 715-735. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920514532664

Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi structured method*s. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209717

Williams, D. A., & Clowney, C. (2007). Strategic Planning for diversity and organizational change. *Effective Practices for Academic Leaders*, 2(3), 1-16.

Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(4), 659-691. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.m6867014157m707l

**JLER**
Vol 8, No 2

http://journals.sfu.ca/cvj/index.php/cvj/index

# BOOK REVIEW

**Anna Rodell**
*University of Florida*

*Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Practice: Defining "Servingness" at HSIs*
Ed. Gina Ann Garcia
Information Age Publishing
Pages: 381
Published: 2020
Price: $45.99 (Paperback)

Citation:
Garcia, G. A. (Ed.) (2020). *Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) in practice: Defining "servingness" at HSIs*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Word Count: 1543, including references

**AUTHOR NOTE**
Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Anna Rodell, University of Florida, College of Education, School of Teaching and Learning. E-mail: anna.rodell@ufl.edu.

In her 2019 solo-authored work, *Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities*, Gina Garcia contested the race-neutral face of education policy and demonstrated how the embodied race of Latinx students becomes the institutional race of the colleges and universities they attend. Using rich data she gathered at a range of HSIs, Garcia provided six considerations for reframing HSI practice to better serve Latinx students, evaluating "systemic, political, and historic forces… [alongside] individual and organizational forces" to advance an understanding of servingness as multidimensional (Garcia et al., 2019, p. 770). In the present edited volume, *Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Practice: Defining "Servingness" at HSIs,* Garcia connects her previously developed framework (outlined with Koren in Chapter 1) with the experiential knowledge of practitioners at Hispanic Serving Institutions. *HSIs in Practice* highlights exemplars of HSIs that allocate federal funds to effectively serve Latinx students, providing resources and experiences aimed at reducing inequity and improving student outcomes.

Garcia recognizes the difficulty of defining "servingness" because HSI status is enrollment-driven, HSI student populations are extremely diverse, HSIs comprise different types of institutions, and HSIs span different regions of the country (pp. xii-xiii). Consequently, her co-authored Chapter 1 with Emily Koren draws on a Multidimensional Conceptual Framework for Understanding Servingness in HSIs (Garcia et al., 2019), which defines servingness according to a range of factors. Within this framework, student outcomes and experiences, both academic and non-academic, are "indicators of serving" (p. 3). Outcomes include GPA, course completion, persistence, transfer and graduation rates, academic self-concept, racial identity, and graduate school aspirations. Experiences include positive indicators of serving, such as cultural validation and mentoring, as well as negative indicators such as racial microaggressions, discrimination, and harassment. The framework also considers institutional "structures for serving" (p. 6), including curriculum, mission statements, decision-making practices, and community engagement. Garcia and Koren make clear that the way HSI practitioners "conceptualize and operationalize servingness" (p. 11) within these structures is a vastly understudied but crucial avenue to understand what it means to be or become an effective Hispanic Serving Institution.

The remaining chapters share practitioners' experiences and strategies for carrying out servingness. Chapters 2-10 answer the question of how practitioners are better serving Latinx students by transforming the organizational structures of their institutions. Chapters 11-17 address academic and non-academic indicators of serving and how these indicators shape student outcomes. Through strategies ranging from curriculum transformation to speaker series to strengthening community and family connections, the practitioner authors demonstrate many forms of "servingness" by which they fulfill their responsibilities to the Latinx students who, more than simply bringing in funding, shape the character and structure of these institutions.

This review highlights three cases to demonstrate the range of both institutional models and approaches to servingness within HSIs included in this edited book. California Lutheran University (Ch. 2, 8, 11, & 13) is a private, faith-based institution around which the Latinx community grew significantly in the past two decades. University of California Santa Cruz (Ch. 3, 5, 6, 10, & 17) is a public land-grant R1 university. Springfield Technical Community College (Ch. 4) is located in a historical Massachusetts manufacturing hub that has experienced a steady population decline and increasing poverty since 1960 (p. 63). Like institutions covered in other chapters, these cases illustrate concrete ways that HSIs are advancing servingness.

Cal Lutheran diversified the student body through financial aid programs, recruitment, and student support services to become an HSI. Authors reveal how Cal Lutheran established an HSI task force and incorporated Latinx servingness into its vision and mission, focusing on programs, identity, and practices. They highlight the key role of marketing—from brochures to website branding to plans for social media outreach—in establishing and publicizing an authentic HSI identity, offering lessons for similar institutions (Chapter 2). Moreover, Cal Lutheran reveals the essential nature of community engagement and partnership to servingness, demonstrating how private and public community organizations support the university's efforts at building trust and opening communication between the institution, community partners, and Latinx students

interested in STEM (Chapter 8). Finally, Cal Lutheran indicates the value of incorporating an Academic Mindset Development Framework, which aims to help Latinx students feel capable, connected, and inspired (pp. 234-239). This has increased both positive academic behaviors and non-academic outcomes, such as self-efficacy and a sense of belonging (Chapters 11, 13).

The University of California, Santa Cruz came to center race in serving students by utilizing research rooted in racial justice to address unequal experiences and outcomes for Latinx students. The authors emphasize the importance of a long-term commitment to racial justice and race-consciousness in becoming an HSI (Chapters 3, 10). UCSC highlights the usefulness of both non-academic and academic strategies to serve Latinx students. A professional development workshop through interactive theater aimed to equip academic advisors to identify and mitigate microaggressions and provide students with a sense of belonging on campus through microaffirmations (Chapter 5). Transforming the College Algebra curriculum to better serve students resulted in raising Latinx students' final grades and increasing their confidence and sense of belonging. UCSC achieved this by redesigning the course through 1) strengths-based pedagogy, 2) student-professional teaching teams, 3) feedback loops to connect students and lecturers, and 4) course-embedded holistic advising. The success of this initiative increased institutional support for HSI initiatives more broadly at UCSC and encouraged more STEM faculty to redesign their courses to better serve Latinx students (Chapter 6). Compellingly, the UCSC case also underscores the value of engaging with families and culture in order to serve Latinx and low-income students well. UCSC's Regional Family Conference aims to include family in the college transition, eliminate barriers to access, and increase the availability of culturally-relevant programs. Based on reports of helpfulness from students and families, the authors recommend that other HSIs also center culture-, language-, and family-affirming practices in their efforts at servingness (Chapter 17).

Springfield Technical Community College frames its servingness through training faculty and staff to serve minoritized students. The authors highlight the need for faculty and staff at a technical community college like Springfield to consider their Latinx students' cultural wealth, background, and needs, especially to mediate equity disparities in persistence and degree completion. Springfield has utilized HSI grant funding to provide professional development that fills in the gaps in faculty and staff's knowledge and skills for serving Latinx students, completing the training through nationally recognized programs. It is worth considering why Springfield did not dedicate some portion of the grant funding to hiring Latinx faculty and staff who already possess the necessary cultural awareness to serve Latinx students. That said, all faculty and staff should, ideally, be equipped to serve students equitably (Chapter 4).

This book offers rich lessons for HSI leadership. Where prior literature on HSIs has explored history, policies, funding, and racialization, *HSIs in Practice* illuminates the authors' experiences of how they define servingness through federally funded practices at their respective institutions. These are the people leading efforts on college and university campuses to become and grow as institutions that serve Latinx students well, and their practices offer ample, actionable insights for serving-in-practice. Both researchers and practitioners interested in understanding

what it looks like to effectively serve Latinx students at HSIs can learn from the challenges and successes of these authors.

Moreover, this book could serve as a resource for leaders at the federal level to reform the standards used to determine the ongoing allocation of funds to eligible Hispanic Serving Institutions. Currently, eligibility requirements include enrolling a student body that is at least 25% Latinx, of whom at least 50% are low-income (Vargas & Villa-Palomino, 2018, p. 405). Not all eligible institutions seek or receive federal funding, but those that do have limited accountability for how they allocate funds. Vargas and Villa-Palomino (2018) found that only 10% of HSIs took a Latinx-centered approach to serving in their grant abstracts, while 85% took a colorblind approach, and 4% usurped funds for initiatives that would not benefit most Latinx students. For example, one university allocated all of its multimillion dollars in HSI funding to a STEM program that enrolled only 3.6% of the Latinx students at the institution, and then called that "serving" with the aim of increasing Latinx STEM enrollment (Vargas & Villa-Palomino, 2018). These findings demonstrate that without a clear definition of servingness, allocations ultimately may not serve Latinx students at all.

By contrast, each institution detailed in *HSIs in Practice* demonstrates well-evidenced strategies to center Latinx students in the allocation of federal HSI funds. In combination with Garcia et al.'s (2019) multidimensional framework, these cases can serve as a guideline for verifying servingness in practice, according to the benefits afforded to Latinx students. These insights could assist federal educational leaders in developing accountability measures to ensure the stated aim of "serving" Latinx students is authentically implemented at funded HSIs.

## REFERENCES

Garcia, G. A. (2019). *Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

Garcia, G. A., Núñez, A.-M., Sansone, V. A. (2019). Toward a multidimensional conceptual framework for understanding "servingness" in Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): A synthesis of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 89*(5), 745-784. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654319864591

Vargas, N., & Villa-Palomino, J. (2018). Racing to serve or race-ing for money? Hispanic Serving Institutions and the colorblind allocation of racialized federal funding. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, 5*(3), 401-415. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649218769409

CLEAR | Center for Leadership Equity and Research