

**Latino Educational Leadership Across the Pipeline:
For Latino Communities and Latina/o Leaders**

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Abstract

The fastest growing and largest underserved demographic in schools across the United States is of a Latino, Spanish speaking ancestry. Since leadership and leadership preparation matter, educational leaders at all levels are being challenged with providing more than just an adequate education, but rather, rich educational opportunities in serving Latino communities. Latino Educational Leadership acknowledges the unique perspectives that inform the support for Latino communities and the preparation of Latina/o leaders throughout the P-20 pipeline. This review of the literature will focus on the institutional aspect of Latino Educational Leadership in an effort to further understand and develop what this concept entails in terms of existing research and theoretical perspectives used to frame this work. In this way, this review will help serve as a springboard for greater scholarship efforts in this area that can further inform policy and practice.

**Latino Educational Leadership Across the Pipeline:
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Latina/os are a growing demographic in the U.S., as they are now the second largest racial/ethnic group in the country comprising 17% of the total population (*Excelencia in Education*, 2015). As of 2011, Latina/o student enrollment in K-12 schools reached an all time high with almost “one-quarter (23.9%) of the nation’s public school enrollment” being Latina/o (Fry & Lopez, 2012, p. 6). School-aged Latina/os have also been making gains in academic achievement, as high school completion rates have risen to 65% and high school dropout rates have fallen to 13% (*Excelencia in Education*, 2015). Yet the diversity within the Latina/o student population is also important to consider as 68.9% of all Latina/o elementary and secondary school students in 2007 spoke a language other than English at home, and 17.5% of these students spoke English with difficulty (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). While not all of these Latina/o students might be considered English language learners (ELLs), the ELL student population in U.S. schools also increased from 9% in 2002 to 10% in 2011 (Aud, et al., 2013).

Despite these continued changing demographics among students, a majority of public school teachers (81.9%) and school principals (80.3%) are White (Digest of Education Statistics, 2013). Among full- and part-time K-12 public school teachers during the 2010-11 school year, only 7.8% were Latina/o (Digest of Education Statistics, 2013). Among the 89,790 full- or part-time public school principals in the U.S. in 2010-11, only 6.8% or 6,120 were Latina/o (Digest of Education Statistics, 2013). Given these stark statistics and continued concerns over the need to increase Latina/o student achievement in K-12 schools, there has been an increasing urgency in the field of educational leadership to prepare and support both Latina/o educational leaders and

leaders who can understand and meet the needs of Latino communities (Murakami, Valle, & Méndez-Morse, 2013; Sanchez, Thornton, & Usinger, 2009).

There is equal concern at the postsecondary level as well. As of 2011, Latina/o student enrollment in postsecondary institutions nationwide reached an all time high with 18-to 24-year old Latina/os comprising 16.5% of all college enrollments, a 13.6% increase since 1972 (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Aside from enrollment gains, Latina/os have also made record strides in degrees conferred with 140,000 Latina/os receiving bachelor degrees and 112,000 receiving associate degrees in 2010 (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Today there are also more Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) than ever before (370), reflecting the increase in Latina/o college enrollment (*Excelencia in Education*, 2015). However, despite such promising gains concern has not waned over how to best eliminate some of the challenges that this diverse student population still faces in accessing, persisting, and matriculating in higher education given the increasing size of the Latina/o population in the U.S. (Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez, & Solórzano, 2006; *Winning the Future*, 2011). One consideration is the fact that almost half (46%) of all Latina/os are enrolled at two-year institutions, which greatly increases their odds of encountering challenges related to transferring to a four-year institution. Thus, as Fry and Lopez (2012) note, there is still work to be done as “the Latino share among degree recipients significantly lagged their share among 18-to-24-year old students enrolled in two-year colleges (21.7%) and four-year colleges and universities (11.7%) in 2010” (p. 5). Latina/os also only represent 7% of all students in graduate education, with Latina/os representing only 7% of all master’s and 5% of all doctoral degrees conferred (*Excelencia in Education*, 2015).

The few Latina/os attaining graduate degrees consequently impacts the number of Latina/os who are in the leadership pipeline in higher education, as administrators and faculty. In

2011, only 4% of all full-time faculty at degree granting institutions were Latina/o (Aud, et al., 2013). In comparison, 79% of all full-time faculty in 2011 were White, 6% were Black, and 9% were Asian/Pacific Islander. Latina/os were also less represented in higher-ranking faculty positions. For instance, 6% of Latina/os were lecturers, 7% instructors, 5% assistant professors, 4% associate professors, and only 3% were full professors (Aud, et al., 2013). Betts, Urias, Chavez, and Betts (2009) compiled demographic data from various sources to reveal the limited minority representation in higher education administration, which includes 14% of college and university presidents (American Council for Education, 2007), 19% of managerial, executive, and administrative staff (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2008), 22% of governing board members at public colleges and universities (Association for Governing Boards, n.d.), and 12% of governing board members at private and independent colleges and universities (Association for Governing Boards, n.d.). Consequently, there has been an increasing need to consider how higher education institutions can better prepare, develop, and retain Latina/o leaders and scholars (in K-12 and higher education), as well as develop leaders who utilize culturally responsive approaches to meet the needs of Latina/o college students in order to ensure their academic success (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Ponjuan, 2012; Valle & Rodríguez, 2012).

Therefore, by conceptualizing what Latino Educational Leadership entails along the P-20 education pipeline we can begin to formalize efforts that will contribute to the development of scholarship and efforts around educational leadership for Latino communities. The intent here is to begin to shape a greater collaboration of scholars to epistemologically shape Latino Educational Leadership across the educational pipeline and to do so strategically for the Latino community. Further, in conceptualizing Latino Educational Leadership, through our review of existing literature, the authors here agree that moving forward epistemologically translates to a

transformative synthesis across the paradigm of critical theories that infuses the concepts of both serving Latino communities, and preparing Latina/o educational leaders across the P-20 educational context. Therefore, as a working leadership definition based on a pan-critical theory synthesis and with aspirations for epistemological growth, the primary purpose of this article is to arrive at a developing conceptualization of Latino Educational Leadership. It is the hope of the authors that this working definition will grow and evolve as the scholarship, theory, and practice of serving Latino communities and preparing Latina/o educational leaders across and within P-20 educational contexts both grows and evolves. Therefore, we first provide a synthesis of current theoretical frameworks used in the realm of Latina/o Educational Leadership. We then examine existing literature that provides the foundation for understanding how best to meet the needs of Latina/o communities and prepare Latina/o leaders in K-12 and higher education contexts.

Synthesis of Theoretical Frameworks

“By bringing in our own approaches and methodologies, we transform that theorizing space” (Anzaldúa, 1990, p. xxv).

Critical theories acknowledge that our understanding of knowledge (epistemology) is shaped by our shared and collective experiences as they are influenced by both the distribution and access to power. From Marxist theoretical tradition, the Frankfurt School established that critical theories moved away from other theories by creating a space of transformation or emancipation from the control and distribution of power (Horkheimer, 1972). Further adopting the definition of power by David Nyberg (1981), power is the production of intended effects and is a fundamental concept in social science that has three facets: it is social, psychological and instrumental. “The minimum and necessary conditions of power are two people and one plan for action” (p. 40). In other words, leadership in effect is power, and to do so for the purpose of

transformation, or more specifically, to transform Latino communities towards greater socially just educational experiences and outcomes is the aim of the authors in conceptualizing Latino Educational Leadership. In order to arrive at a working definition of Latino Educational Leadership through a conceptualization, the authors here use a synthesis of multiple critical theories and leadership theories that draw connections to serving Latino communities or in the preparation of Latina/o educational leaders.

Given that the educational systems and institutions throughout the U.S. P-20 pipeline serve a growing demographic of Latino communities, acknowledging the racialized realities of Latino communities and the system of oppression that exists for them is critical to the concept of serving Latino communities. Critical Race Theorists (CRT) use five tenets to begin to acknowledge the racialized experiences of peoples in education: 1) that racism is normal and ordinary, not aberrant, in U.S. society; 2) interest convergence and material determinism move both the elite and social activists towards social justice progress; 3) race as a social construction informs the racialized experiences of people of color; 4) intersectionality and anti-essentialism and the complexity of multiple identities across race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and so on must be acknowledged; and 5) voice and counter-narratives must chronicle the challenges to the dominant narrative (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Solórzano (2013) further enhances the intersectionality of multiple identities beyond traditional CRT notions to include experiences of immigration, language, and citizenship, which conceptualizes the unique theoretical space of Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCRT).

However, in addition to acknowledging the racialized experiences of people of color, and more specifically Latino communities, the assumptions that undergird the systemic treatment of people of color must also be considered. More specifically, central to the on-going battle of

combating racism within systems of oppression is moving beyond deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010). Valencia explains deficit thinking through six characteristics and practices expressed by dominant ideology. 1) Victim blaming that tends to associate education challenges with social and cultural identity, such as blaming children for not being able to read proficiently for being poor as oppose to assessing inequities in early childhood education or the biased use of testing; 2) Oppression and the power differential between the elite and the oppressed also plays out in policy when broad sweeping reform policy like 3rd Grade Reading Retention policies that hold back children for not being able to read proficiently; while elite families have the resources to prepare children for 3rd grade reading proficiency, others have not had equitable access. 3) Pseudoscience and the prevalence of biased research further plays out when promoters of such 3rd Grade Reading Retention policies argue that prison population estimates are based on reading proficiency in the 3rd grade. 4) Temporal changes in what explains the understanding of failure from class, family, to culture, which have occurred dependent on social and welfare programs like Head Start and the Food Stamp programs in the 1960s and how they have influenced assumptions about equal opportunity and access to equitable resources. 5) Educability and the prescriptive nature of science and practice, such as 3rd Grade Reading Retention policies that also use testing to explain failure and success of students based on socio-economic status, and what interventions are necessary for students. 6) Lastly, heterodoxy that is pervasive in scholarship and ideological spaces that continue to apply explanations of the academic achievement gap in reading proficiency based on social and cultural predictors, rather than a system of inequity.

Case in point of moving beyond deficit thinking is Yosso's (2005, 2006) notion of Community Cultural Wealth that extends beyond Bourdieu's commonly applied concepts of social and cultural capitals to explain the success of Chicana/o students, and other communities

of color. Community Cultural Wealth acknowledges that Chicana/o students also have social, familial, linguistic, navigational, aspirational, and resistant capitals that together, and at times simultaneously provide Chicana/os with greater and multiple forms of cultural capital. For example, Yosso's community cultural wealth explains the success of Chicana/Chicano college students through diverse experiences where students had to navigate and negotiate spaces and people that created greater challenges to academic progress. Often experiences where teachers do not believe in the success of their students, students may set out to prove them wrong using resistance capital.

The connection to the education of Latino communities comes through the work of Solórzano (2013), who ultimately arrives at CRT and LatCRT in addressing tensions in the education of Latino communities through Paulo Freire's 1970 foundational work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire (1970) unpacks the pedagogy of the oppressed through the institutionalization of dominant ideology, which is oppressive in nature and operationalized through the system of education. Other critical works have expanded on this line of thinking, positing that it is in schools where the greatest harm is enacted, where systematic inequities result in academic failure for communities of color. In fact, Richard Valencia's works through *Chicano School Failure and Success: Past, Present and Future* (2010, 2002, 1991) and now *Students of Color and the Achievement Gap: Systemic Challenges, Systemic Transformations* (2015), acknowledges education challenges for Latino communities beyond a deficit thinking perspective by addressing how schools and educational systems fail. Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) and Santamaría (2014) strengthen this connection to schools and offer an Applied Critical Leadership lens through leaders of color by using transformative leadership approaches, Freire's critical pedagogical practices, and Critical Race Theory to explain the positive influence that

diverse school leaders have on school settings that serve diverse student populations. However, Valencia (2010) acknowledges that both White and educators of color can also perpetuate deficit thinking practices.

Therefore, if *Leadership Matters* (UCEA, 2009; Darling-Hammond, et. al, 2007) in the educational experiences and outcomes of students, then educational leadership is tantamount to the education of Latino communities, and hence the importance of conceptualizing Latino Educational Leadership. However, while Latino Educational Leadership acknowledges the importance of preparing Latina/o educational leaders to serve Latino communities, currently the majority of educational leaders throughout the P-20 system in the U.S. are overwhelmingly White (see above), stressing the need to consider how Latino Education Leadership must transcend across leaders from all backgrounds. So what then should leadership look like in serving Latino communities given the under-representation of Latina/o leaders across P-20 education contexts? The previous critical scholars have greatly contributed to the conceptualization of Latino Educational Leadership, yet the authors recognize there is more work to be done, to advance the concept in a manner that advances how Latino communities are served throughout the P-20 educational system in the U.S.

Latina/o Leadership in K-12

The frameworks and theorizing spaces presented by the authors throughout this paper encourage the expansion, use, and further conceptualization of the work of Latino Educational Leadership as an asset to further enhance the landscape of educational leadership. Leading K-12 schools today means having an expertise in high stakes accountability, assessments, common-core, interpreting school policies, unpacking standards and objectives and successfully leading schools with a diverse population of students that bring cultural wealth into schools. However,

previous leadership models of schooling are incomplete and do not identify the full scope of competencies and skills needed to lead current and future diverse schools. Without leadership, that involves the many rather than the few, those in formal leadership positions will continue to be vulnerable and exposed (Harris, 2014). Moreover, as previously noted, current school leadership across the country does not reflect the student population.

The notion of Latino Educational Leadership along the K-12 educational pipeline comes out of leadership traditions that emphasize the value of fostering democratic, inclusive, and collaborative educational practices that promote social justice and equity (Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012; Singleton, 2015, Theoharris, 2009, Tillman & Scheurich, 2013). We advocate for continued research and work along the K-12 education continuum to frame Latina/o students and Latina/o school leaders in the additive. Historically, many Latina/os and allies took to the streets and courtrooms in protest of egregious learning conditions and poor educational quality, speaking out against injustice in an attempt to influence policy makers (Irizarry & Nieto, 2010). Irizarry and Nieto (2010) further argue, educational research has become a vehicle for activism and a site through which to combat educational, cultural and social oppression. To further shift the conversation from one that asserts Latina/o students do not fit the current K-12 model of schooling, we frame research and frameworks where this emergent population provides additive capital, helping to create the new molds and models of practice and theory for school leaders. The important body of research highlighted throughout the article has emerged from academic, racial and cultural struggles in K-12 environments. It represents a shift from purportedly objective accounts of Latina/o student performance that fails to acknowledge and remain distant from the sociocultural contexts in which Latino/a students are embedded to

more culturally connected approaches that value the capital and cultural wealth present in Latino communities (Irizarry & Nieto, 2010; Yosso, 2005).

Latino Educational Leadership attempts to challenge the dominant narrative and leadership ideologies that limits the Latina/o student experience by further framing issues of access and inequalities for K-12 school leaders. For example, Solórzano and Ornelas, (2004) argue these inequalities persist in structures and processes they refer to as “schools within schools” in their research with Latina/o students around the access and availability to Advanced Placement (AP) courses. While in school, Latina/o students are more likely to attend impoverished schools, demonstrate lower performance in math, science, and reading, and are more often retained and disciplined than their White peers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). Advanced curriculum access in K-12 schooling is a gateway to college and provides Latina/os a platform for a strong postsecondary future. However, disparities continue to plague Latina/os students in comparison to their White peers in schools across the country. Solórzano and Ornelas, (2004) also found Latina/o students are disproportionately underrepresented in AP enrollments district-wide and schools that serve urban and low income Latino communities have low student enrollment in AP courses. Unfortunately these persistent measures fuel and perpetuate deficit thinking and practices among K-12 school leaders and educators who see the potential of Latino students in the subtractive. Valenzuela (1999) argues that schools subtract resources from youth in two major ways: first by dismissing their definition of education and second, through assimilationist policies and practices that minimize their culture and language. Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) further assert that uprooted ethnic and low-income minority children are expected to adjust rapidly to their adoptive culture, learn the language quickly, and be clearly committed to a new set of cultural values.

The structures and processes of school leadership, where racial discourse is absent, is further challenged by scholars like Hernandez, Murakami-Ramalho, and Quijada Cerecer (2013). In their work, they studied a Latina school principal who leads for social justice and examined how the influences of racial identity challenge school leaders to reflect on their practice and participation in leading students of color. The study asserts that improving the educational conditions of students of color is possible through principals who are willing to reflect on their values, beliefs, and practices and explore how these values and beliefs influence their work with students, families, and communities. This study is a product of the early work and vision of Frank Hernandez, Elizabeth Murakami-Ramalho, Sylvia Mendez-Morse and Monica Byrne-Jimenez who collectively instituted the National Latino Leadership Project (NLLP) in an effort to collect data from Latina/o school leaders across the country to continue learning about the contributions that Latina/o school leaders are making to K-12 public school systems. This national project both advances and advocates for Latina/o leaders to encourage students to build upon their cultural heritage, and encourage their campuses to nurture students' and families' traditions while improving the academic knowledge of students (National Latino Leadership Project, 2015).

For school principals across the country, issues of equity in schools are framed around the limits of students and how this reflects on the performance of the school or the district. However, in order to grow as an educator, critical, honest and timely feedback and reflection is needed for school leaders, as well as for teachers and staff. CRT scholars have theorized, examined and challenged the ways in which race and racism shape schooling structures, practices and discourse (Yosso, 2005), and utilizing such a lens would be useful in examining equity issues in schools to help school leaders and educators grow and more aptly meet the needs

of diverse students. Unfortunately, the work of K-12 principals is often not examined in practice through a CRT lens or with critical pedagogies in mind, and therefore is not part of the dominant discourse or narrative in school districts and is limited in educational leadership. Scheurich (1998) argues that evidence already exists on how schools can provide racial equality, enable high student performance and ensure school improvement in this era of accountability; create a different community, one based on love and caring for students of color. Furthermore, Parker and Villalpando (2007) assert one of the ways to start is to deal with the issue of trust/mistrust between educational leaders and teachers/faculty and students of color and their families and communities, because in a real sense, perception is reality, and whether administrators agree with this or not, it cannot be ignored when trying to achieve racial equality in the context of increasing federal and state accountability. Nonetheless, the battle for racial equity in public schools is the fight of many educators, school leaders and scholars of color in educational leadership.

In this battle for racial equity, there is one organization that has gained national prominence to center practices around the improvement of Latino families, communities and their school leaders. The Association of Latino Administrators & Superintendents (ALAS) highlights their history, mission and current work in a strong message commemorating the organization's 10-year anniversary; out of 14,000 school districts across the United States, less than 250 are led by Latina/o school leaders (Association of Latino Administrators & Superintendents, 2015). ALAS grew with the support of the California Association of Latino Superintendents and Administrators (CALSA), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). ALAS was formally established in 2003 as an affiliate of the AASA connecting Latina/o educational leaders with a strong emphasis on inspiring action towards solving real-world

problems involving Latina/o students. With an office in Washington D.C and over 4,000 members, the ALAS *familia* and network is ensuring the most qualified leaders are in place to lead our schools and our students.

The charge and gaps in educational leadership literature suggest the need for additional studies that show how Latina/o leaders have the skill set to mitigate the achievement, or opportunity gap and ensure that tomorrow's workforce will be prepared to be part of the country's economic future. This is a task placed upon school leaders across the country. Currently, Latina/o principals can be found leading in suburban, urban, rural, and U.S.-Mexico border schools. They have led passionately and often must do it silently and in hiding, making an impact for Latina/o students, families and communities in spite of challenges and inequities existing in the structures of schooling. Thus, the welfare of Latina/o students is an important part of the platform for Latino Educational Leadership. For the many Latina/o school leaders who learned to be savvy and navigate within a system that was oppressive and unfair, we honor your bravery and courage to lead. Our goal is to move away from the notion that Latino Leadership has to be "leadership *a las escondidas*" to a framework that is central in discourse and modeled for the welfare of Latina/o students across the country.

Latina/o Leadership in Higher Education

The dearth of scholarship focused on the preparation of Latina/o leaders in higher education further suggests that "there still is not a discernable body of knowledge on the nature and dynamics of Latino leadership in higher education...[nor is there a] clear theoretical framework that has been systematically applied in the study of this subject matter" (Martinez, 2005, p. 17). What we do know is that Latina/os today remain greatly underrepresented in positions of academic leadership within postsecondary institutions, whether as administrators or

faculty. Moreover, “as one moves from the lower to the higher end of the stratification system of higher education one finds fewer and fewer Latinos” (p. 18). Yet while some of the most notable national organizations in higher education such as the American Council on Education and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, as well as Latina/o focused organizations like the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and the National Chicano Council on Higher Education continue to support initiatives to diversify leadership and faculty in higher education, gains have remained incremental. Limited gains in preparing a critical mass of Latina/o leaders in higher education reflects a lack of visible and sustained commitment from institutions of higher education with regards to these efforts. An additional result of this lack of commitment is Latina/os within higher education settings feeling that “serious contradictions exist between the value and reward systems of their colleges and the needs of the students and communities that they serve” (Santiago, 1996, p. 29). Consequently, Santiago argues that, “Latina/os in the leadership pipeline who are committed to access, excellence, and equity in higher education for all students are likely to face increasing challenges and will, therefore, need to be armed with more skills” (p. 29).

Some studies have shed light on some of the critical factors that have provided Latina/o leaders in higher education with such skills and preparation to be successful. For instance, in a nationwide, mixed method study on Latina community college administrators (including presidents, chancellors, campus presidents), Muñoz (2009) found a number of commonalities among participants that were key to their preparation for leadership positions. This included professional leadership/development programs and fellowships such as the National Community College Hispanic Council Leadership Fellow Program, professional affiliations, and mentorship. Qualitative data gathered from 13 Latina community college presidents reiterated these things,

but also included the significant role of obtaining one's academic credentials makes for establishing credibility and advancement. Participants also described some "salient events that took place during youth [that] also emerged as a foundation for subsequent actions in life (p. 165).

Other scholars have reiterated the positive impact that mentoring, formal and informal leadership development programs, and having varied professional experiences in different settings and at multiple levels has on the Latina/o leadership pipeline in higher education (Gutierrez, Castañeda & Katsinas, 2002; Haro & Lara, 2003; Martinez, 2005). Yet while we know that more investment in developing leadership training programs and providing increased opportunities to Latina/os to develop these skills are needed, existing efforts remain limited. A true commitment to such efforts will require that institutions of higher education commit themselves to "achieving multiculturalism in their pedagogy and curriculum, and pluralism in their governance and administrative structures" (Santiago, 1996, p. 25).

Beyond preparing Latina/o leaders in higher education, there is the urgency to ensure that higher education institutions are serving Latina/o students to the best of their abilities, with the unique needs of Latina/os in mind. Existing research in this area has centered on the critical role that Hispanic-Serving institutions (HSIs) play in this effort and those strategies that have been proven to help Latina/os access and matriculate in higher education. As previously mentioned, about half of all Latina/os (46%) are enrolled at a community college, and over two-thirds of these 2-year institutions are Hispanic-Serving (*Excelencia in Education*, 2015). Consequently, the role that current HSI's play in serving Latina/os is vital to consider (Arciniega, 2012; Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015). The attraction of HSIs for Latina/os is particularly based on their

affordability and tendency to be closer to home, which are significant factors to Latina/os in choosing an institution (Benitez, 1998; Núñez & Bowers, 2011; Santiago, 2008).

Moreover, given the growing nature of the Latina/o population and how institutions obtain Hispanic-Serving status (having 25% or more of total undergraduate, full-time Latina/o student enrollment), it is likely that many more postsecondary institutions will become HSIs. Yet this process of becoming an HSI has often been unintentional on the part of institutions because of the growth of the Latino population (Calderón Galdeano, Flores, & Moder, 2012; Gasman, 2008). This means that serving Latina/o students is not always a purposeful mission for most institutions that have become HSIs, with the exception of Hostos Community College and Boricua College in New York and National Hispanic University in California that were purposefully established to serve Latina/o students and resulted from the Civil Rights Movement (Gasman, 2008). As Calderón Galdeano, et al. (2008) note, “because the HSI definition does not necessarily involve history or mission, the degree to which institutions embrace their HSI identity varies” and ultimately impacts whether an HSI is truly committed to serving Latina/o students well or is simply enrolling a large number of Latina/o students (p. 160).

Additionally, despite the popularity of 2-year HSI’s among Latina/os, there are some challenges that these institutions face that some have argued might limit their ability to adequately serve Latina/os. For instance, many HSIs have limited budgets and endowments, are underequipped and understaffed, and are restricted in their ability to develop baccalaureate and graduate programs (Benitez, 1998; Del Rios & Leegwater, 2008). These obstacles are coupled with the fact that many Latina/os who attend HSI’s often tend to be from lower income backgrounds, the first in their families to attend college, and are often not academically prepared for college-level work when compared to their White peers (Merisotis & McCarthy, 2005; Núñez

& Bowers, 2011; Núñez, Sparks, & Hernandez, 2011). These are all issues that leaders, faculty, and staff at HSI's must contend with while ensuring their Latina/o students are successful.

In their efforts, many HSI's have identified and utilized effective strategies to support Latina/o academic success and increase their college completion rates. These are strategies that other higher education institutions serving Latina/o students can learn from. Approaches include: providing academic cohorts and adequate support programs (Benitez & DeAro, 2004; Cortez, 2011, 2015), providing accurate and comprehensive guidance and advising (Benitez & DeAro, 2004; Santiago, 2008), ensuring the climate of the campus is culturally inclusive (Cortez, 2011, 2015; Medina & Posadas, 2012; Nuñez, et al., 2013) and that culturally responsive pedagogies (Garcia, 2012; Nuñez, et al., 2013) are utilized, maintaining affordability, (Cortez, 2011; Santiago, 2008), and purposefully hiring faculty and staff committed to diversity and excellence (Cortez, 2011; Santiago, 2008).

Additionally, any postsecondary institution that is purposeful in meeting the needs of Latina/o students must recognize the significant role of family in Latina/o students' lives. Thus, "helping Latino students retain their family social networks as they create new ones in college supports their academic success and belonging in college (Nuñez, 2005; Saunders & Serna, 2004, as cited in Nuñez, et al., 2013, p. 69). Other aspects that are key to contributing to Latina/o students' sense of belonging and intent to persist on any higher education campus is faculty and staff's ability to be self-reflexive in their practice and cognizant of the their own assumptions of Latina/o students (Nuñez, Murakami, & Cuero, 2010; Patton et al., 2007, as cited in Nuñez, et al., 2013, p. 72), so as to recognize and validate the diversity among Latina/o students and their academic capabilities. Moreover, there must be an institutional commitment from the top down to create a supportive campus climate for Latina/o students where Latina/o

student support is embraced, professional development opportunities are ample to help faculty and staff understand the diversity and needs of Latina/o students, and the hiring of Latina/o faculty and staff is purposeful to ensure structural diversity (Nunez et al., 2013). The “adequate representation of Latino students, faculty, and administrators on campus, can positively contribute to Latino students’ postsecondary outcomes by encouraging Latino college students to see that there are others like them on campus, to feel that they are less isolated, and to have more access to role models and peers who understand their background (e.g., Gurin et al., 2002) (Nunez, et al., 2013, p. 74). Beyond this, opportunities to learn about Latino culture through coursework and extracurricular programming and organizations can also contribute to a stronger sense of belonging on a campus for Latina/o students (Nuñez, et al., 2013).

Conclusion and Working Definition of Latino Leadership

In light of existing literature, we posit that Latino Educational Leadership across the P-20 pipeline in the U.S. recognizes the importance of serving Latino communities and families, while negotiating/navigating a greater dominant socio-political system towards change that improves educational opportunity and equity for diverse learners, as well as, the development of leaders across the educational pipeline that have the capacity to promote cultural, linguistic, and historical connections for Latino communities. Further, in using Applied Critical Leadership acknowledges the rich and unique contributions that educational leaders of color offer in serving diverse populations, Latino Educational Leadership acknowledges the importance and the critical aspect of the preparation of Latina/o educational leaders and scholars throughout the P-20 pipeline. However, deficit thinking and dominant/racist ideology are challenges that cut across all groups and are prevalent in our own communities. But given that educators are overwhelmingly White, critically preparing educational leaders to serve Latino communities that

empower and improve access and equity in schools or educational systems, is paramount to the concept of Latino Educational Leadership. In closing with this working definition of Latino Educational Leadership, we still call upon all scholars and practitioners to consider how their own work contributes to serving Latino communities across the P-20 educational pipeline in the United States, as the authors believe that the concept of Latino Educational Leadership can only evolve as long as we continue to struggle within our own epistemological tensions and applications to leadership practices and policy.

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