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Latinx and the Community College: Promoting Pathways to Postsecondary Degrees

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An Empowerment Framework for Latinx Students in Developmental Education

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Abstract

While developmental education in community colleges has the potential to prepare students for college-level work, its effectiveness and need is often questioned. Further, while Latinx students are overrepresented in developmental courses, there is a dearth of literature on their experiences in such courses and how to effectively serve their needs in developmental contexts. This article provides an overview of the literature related to Latinx students in developmental writing to point out areas that have been understudied and then introduces an Empowerment Framework for Latinx students, a model which combines a deeper understanding of language, power, and preparing Latinx students for college-level writing.

Introduction

In an era of increased accountability, developmental education remains one of the biggest challenges in community colleges today. When academically underprepared students arrive on two-year and four-year campuses, they may be assigned to a variety of classes and services to help them reach college readiness levels in math, reading, and English as quickly as possible (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). The last ten years research has explored an array of interventions including high school programs that help students avoid developmental education later in college and campus-based support programs available to students once they arrive on college campuses (Howell, Kurlaender, & Grodsky, 2009; Kerrigan & Slater, 2010; Rutschow & Schneider, 2011). While the enrollment trends in developmental education have declined somewhat, it is estimated that approximately 40% of all students enrolled in the two-year college sector enroll in some sort of developmental education (Chen & Simone, 2016).

One glaring gap in the literature is work on Latinx students in developmental education. Latinx students are overrepresented on community college campuses nationally (Santiago, Calderón Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015), and it is estimated that approximately 75% of Latinx students in two-year colleges and 53% of Latinx students in four-year colleges enroll in some type of developmental education intervention (Chen & Simone, 2016). An analysis of Latinx students in the California Community College system offers some startling conclusions about these students in developmental education: out of 100 students who place into any level of developmental English, a little more than a third are likely to pass into a college-level, credit-bearing English course (Solórzano, Acevedo-Gil, & Santos, 2013). Even more troubling, the higher the number of developmental courses a student is required to take, the less likely they are to pass into credit-bearing courses (Solórzano et al., 2013).

Given these statistics, the extant body of literature does not provide enough information to know how developmental education positively or negatively impacts Latinx students (Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015). The large enrollment of Latinx students in these courses reveals a research imperative to learn more about what factors promote or inhibit student success and prepare students for college-level coursework. The field of researchers, practitioners, and administrators should focus on the Latinx population in particular and take into account issues salient to these students. As Stein (2005) argues, "We can no longer work off the false paradigm of believing that by researching what works for the White student and for

the African American student will by some sort of default work for Latino students just because they are 'minorities'" (p. 84).

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of the literature on Latinx students in developmental education, particularly in the context of reading and writing courses. As will be discussed, there is a growing body of research paid to students in developmental math, but there is a noticeably smaller amount of attention given to reading and writing. After identifying research that helps frame what we know about developmental reading and writing, I will provide recommendations for considerations researchers and practitioners should make in engaging students in these subjects.

The Conundrum of Developmental Education

Due to their open access missions, community colleges serve many students who are labeled "at risk" and those who face various academic and/or social challenges that may threaten their persistence in college (Porchea, Allen, Robbins, & Phelps, 2010). Developmental education interventions, including a broad range of formal classes and services that aim to build the college readiness skills of students, can vary widely in terms of placement policies (Bettinger & Long, 2009) and the number of courses a college may require a student to take before they may enroll in college-level courses like Freshman Composition (Bailey et al. 2010).

Though not specific to only Latinx students, a number of pre-college factors may contribute to a students' placement in developmental education. In a study focused on placement and success in college mathematics courses across racial/ethnic groups, parents' educational attainment levels, household income, and living in predominantly White and more affluent neighborhoods were statistically significant for non-remedial students in a nationally representative sample (Hagedorn, Siadat, Fogel, Nora, & Pascarella, 1999). High school factors also influence students' need for developmental education. For instance, a lack of academically rigorous mathematics courses in high school has been identified as a risk factor for placement in developmental education in college (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Swail, Cabrera, Lee & Williams, 2005). Latinx students disproportionately attend underresourced high schools that do not offer a rigorous college preparatory curriculum (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The role of high school curriculum in preparing students for college may be even more complicated, however. One troubling finding from a more recent study in Texas is that 80% of students in a sample of over

1,300 students completed the recommended or distinguished tracks for high school graduation, indicating that students may be graduating from high school seemingly ready for college and still place into developmental education, suggesting a disturbing disconnect between high school and college curricula and expectations (Pretlow & Wathington, 2013).

A national focus on boosting the representation of Latinx students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields have placed a focus on developmental mathematics as a critical entry point in students' early college careers. More students across racial/ethnic groups place into developmental mathematics than any other area, and Bahr (2010) illustrates the disparities for Latinx and African American students in math, a key gatekeeper course for students that dictates their access to many college-level courses. For example, while Latinx students show greater levels of persistence in mathematics, their likelihood of successfully passing a developmental math course was lower than their White counterparts. These disparities are attributed to small differences in math achievement that may appear as early as kindergarten and continue to widen as students reach college (Bahr, 2010).

Given the national imperative to increase Latinx representation in STEM majors and jobs (Flores, 2011), the importance of developmental mathematics is vital. However, the focus on one developmental field away from others, specifically reading and writing, only tells one part of the story. Effective reading and writing skills are critical for preparation into the workforce. Stories in popular media often lament the literacy skills of college graduates especially in writing (e.g., Strauss, 2016). The study of writing possesses unique challenges to better understanding the conditions under which Latinx students may thrive.

Challenges of Conducting Research in Writing Settings

Much of the research surrounding developmental education is anecdotal, largely the result of developmental educators publishing reflections of their experiences without a rigorous research design (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Over the last decade, there has been an increase on rigorously studying these students and specific interventions, both qualitatively and quantitatively, for example in the last two decades through initiatives such as Achieving the Dream (Bailey, 2009). In understanding success in college writing, an interesting point to note is that scholars cannot fully agree on what constitutes "college-level" writing. The four basic expectations for writing include, "coherence, clarity, consistence, and (not least) correctness"

(Yancey, 2004, p. 306). This seemingly basic definition of what constitutes "good" writing is highly subjective, and differences between individual teachers' perceptions of essay quality has been documented in the literature (Bloom, 2006; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Thompson & Gallagher, 2010). One study illustrates the differences between one high school and one college instructor in assessing student papers: There was great variation in the approach to grading both teachers took even though they were both assessing the quality of the writing (Thompson & Gallagher, 2010). The high school teacher operates in a reality of standardized tests and rubrics, so she was more likely to grade according to her experiences with those. On the other hand, the college professor's perspective and grading was arguably more subjective and personal. This lack of alignment between high school and writing expectations could potentially fuel students' needs for developmental writing in college.

There is also work in the field of English Studies that suggests that the nature of college writing has changed in the last thirty years (Harris, 2012; Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008). Building on an earlier study on student error (Connors & Lunsford, 1988), a more recent study examined student papers from a national sample and compared them to the samples from previous studies (Lunsford & Lunsford, 2008). They find that students produce longer assignments for their classes and that assignments are far more likely to be persuasive or expository in nature than personal. Convoluting this even further, higher education is starting to grapple with what is meant by "literacy" (Paulson & Armstrong, 2010). Scholars who study college writers are paying increased attention to technology and other types of literacy that shape communication in today's world (Relles & Tierney, 2013). Therefore, the aforementioned Four C's (Yancey, 2004) may be a generic start to understanding the form of college-level writing, the nature of the subject has changed and likely will continue to change in light of changes in the ways writing is taught at the college level. In addition to contending with the challenges of what college-level writing is, researchers concerned with Latinx students must also take into account issues salient to this student population.

Latinx Students' Transition to College

Racism and inequality are imbued in the Latinx educational experience (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Kurlaender, 2006; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). Latinx students encounter a number of acculturative stresses when they enter a college campus that has traditionally been a

predominantly White structure (Nora, 2003; Rendón, 1994). When campus agents, especially faculty, provide content that honors students' cultural backgrounds and encourage them, these agents provide students with validating experiences that have been linked to increased persistence of Latinx students (Rendón, 1994). Without this validation, Latinx students struggle to find curricula, faculty members, mentors, and services that reflect their respective needs among other challenges (Nora, 2003). While research has looked at campus-level factors that promote or predict the success of Latinx community college students (Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2016; Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007), there is a dearth of research that considers the developmental education context.

The Stigma of Remediation

So far, this essay has purposefully avoided use of the word "remediation" in discussing developmental education though the terms are sometimes used interchangeably (e.g., Bailey et al., 2010). The word "remediation" is ubiquitous in the field, yet scholars have long criticized the use of the term. Rose (1985), for example, argued that the term pathologizes students. Bahr (2008) refers to remediation as "by definition, a 'remedy' intended to restore opportunity to those who otherwise may be relegated to meager wages, poor working conditions, and other consequences of socioeconomic marginalization" (p. 422). Bahr's (2008) description of developmental education states the proposed goal of the field, yet a large body of literature calls into question its purpose and efficacy. It is estimated that developmental classes account for ten percent of all credits earned at community colleges annually (Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015), yet one study finds that less than a quarter of students who enroll in developmental education at community colleges receive a degree or certificate within eight years (Bailey, 2009). Grubb and Gabriner (2013), who conducted some of the most in-depth classroom-based research on developmental education, argue that rote teaching and learning is teacher-centered, decontextualized, and lacks meaningful engagement with students. This is troubling considering the system denies students access to mainstream college classes and then fails to prepare them for college-level courses.

Some critics accuse developmental courses of having an adverse effect on student progress and on stigmatizing students who may not be institutionally recognized as college ready (Shor, 2000). Shor (1997) compares the field of developmental education as a type of

institutional apartheid, creating obstacles that cost student precious time and money without providing progress toward a degree program. Even when campuses attempt stigma-free remediation, they may provide students with a false sense of confidence or a lack of understanding on the purpose of remedial courses and these courses' importance for making progress toward degree completion (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002).

The threat of stigma and of hindrance to degree progress is not imaginary. The developmental education experience can have a tremendous impact on Latinx students—for better or worse. Participants in a qualitative study on developmental education experiences described placement in these classes a negative experience, particularly in holding them back from their degree programs (Acevedo-Gil, Santos, Alonso, & Solórzano, 2015). Students reported that faculty could demonstrate a lack of respect of their students and could make them feel dumb through their teaching approaches, perhaps through the same type of indifferent or uninteresting teaching described as remedial pedagogy (Grubb & Gabriner, 2013).

However, the work by Acevedo-Gil and colleagues (2015) suggests that developmental education can provide moments of empowerment for students, helping them to believe in themselves. This study adds to the thin literature on Latinx students in developmental education by showing that there are ways to lift up students and contribute to their future success. The challenge, then, is in helping faculty to identify moments of empowerment and to positively respond to situations where students lose their confidence or motivation. The next section offers a discussion of issues salient to Latinx students in developmental education, especially in writing contexts, which are understudied in the current body of literature that may help faculty teach with the possibility of transforming students' experiences.

Latinx Students, Language, and Writing

Perhaps the most salient and least understood issue regarding Latinx students in developmental writing courses and the community colleges at large is real understanding of their proficiency of English and how their language background may affect their experiences in college. For example, many Latinx students who speak Spanish at home are mislabeled as English as Second Language (ESL) students despite the fact that they received the majority of their education in the United States (Harklau, Siegel, & Losey, 1999). Institutional practices, especially placement policies for developmental education, may not take into account that while

students may speak Spanish, their fluency is verbal only (Newman, 2007). The work of Valdés (2001) and Ferris (2007) explain the complexity of language fluency and acquisition, suggesting that students may be labeled as Spanish dominant and place them in ESL courses when they should be in developmental reading and writing courses. This extra layer of required coursework only delays students' progress in college further and puts possibly unnecessary barriers in their way.

The biggest challenge higher education needs to address with linguistic minority students is twofold. First, institutions need to find ways to identify linguistic minority students and to distinguish them from similar but separate groups of students. For instance, Ferris (2007) pointed out that a developmental writing instructor may encounter both English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and international students. The former group may be Generation 1.5 or recent immigrant students who have received some exposure to the American educational system; the latter may be brand new to the United States. While perhaps superficially similar, Ferris (2007) argues that these two groups and their differing levels of exposure to the American classroom also impacted their needs from their respective instructors.

Bunch and Panayotova (2008) explicate these issues and show how the language proficiency and academic skills testing that students undergo just before starting college can create barriers to Latinx students who are also English Language Learners. Language background no doubt influences some Latinx students' need for and placement into developmental English, and English Language Learners are more likely to be placed into developmental activities (Ignash, 1997). Further, some institutions require English Language Learners to complete multiple levels of developmental courses, including ESL-specific courses to more mainstream developmental courses, before they can move into college-level work (Razfar & Simon, 2011). Ignash (1997) draws a connection between ESL courses and developmental courses, pointing out that debates emerged among scholars as to whether the goals of advanced ESL courses could be or were the same as general developmental writing. In some cases, the separation of ESL and developmental writing results in students having to complete two sequences of non-credit bearing courses before they can enroll in college-level courses (Razfar & Simon, 2011). Finding ways to better understand the common purpose of ESL courses and developmental reading and writing courses and how they can be combined into one course can potentially save students precious time and money while enabling them to move

forward with their degrees more efficiently. Rather than focusing on functional English (e.g., English for the workplace, conversational English), ESL courses might also incorporate elements of academic discourse.

Academic Discourse

Developmental writing courses presumably orient students to academic writing, or the type of writing they will be expected to do once in college-level courses. This type of writing engages students in academic discourse. Hyland (2009) defines academic discourse simply as "the ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy" (p. 1). Academic discourse takes on various forms such as lectures, papers, dissertations, and conference presentations (Hyland, 2009). It also serves a variety of purposes including constructing and transmitting knowledge. Drawing on Gee's (2008) work on Discourse, Hyland (2009) also contends that academic discourse shapes behaviors within the academy including training new academics (thereby reproducing academic discourse) and collaboration with others. In short, academic discourse is a way of communicating, but also a way of behaving with peers within the community. To that end, students undergo an acculturation process as they become members of their academic communities (Hyland, 2009).

Prominent composition scholar Elbow (1991) concedes that academic discourse is a necessary part of teaching students how to write in college, but he argues that students will write in various ways and across various genres for the rest of their lives in settings that do not follow the conventions of the academy. Therefore, the focus of college writing should not be exclusively focused on writing for a professor or speaking to a specific discipline. Instead, it enables students to join conversations through their literacy skills in a variety of contexts. This moderate view speaks in agreement to the types of literacy practices that are necessary for college students and their college knowledge (Conley, 2005).

Additionally, there are scholars who see academic discourse as a non-negotiable part of full participation in the academy. In his now seminal work on academic writing, Bartholomae (2011) evaluated student writing and how students acquired the voice of their disciplines. Bartholomae treated this discourse acquisition as an imperative for students who want to be part of the academy, saying in no uncertain terms, "They must learn to speak our language. Or they must dare to speak it, or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most

certainly be required long before the skill is 'learned'" (p. 5). He continued by describing the performative aspects of writing for the academy, stating that students have to "appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse" (p. 9).

Cultural Dissonance in the Academic Discourse

Villanueva (2011) suggests that the teaching of college writing does not incorporate the full extent of Latinx students' capabilities if they are confined to "traditional" genres and a single language with which to express themselves. Ybarra (2001) accuses basic writing courses of having a cultural dissonance between the expectations of academic writing and the backgrounds of Latinx students. This dissonance is largely the result of instructors' lack of understanding of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds which pervades classroom interactions and writing assignments. Even mention of dominant or mainstream culture (e.g., sports, entertainment) can be misguided because this assumes that all students have the same point of reference (Pappamihiel & Moreno, 2011). Students placed in these classes become suspicious of the course and of the education system in general (Ybarra, 2001). What is also highly contentious is the way students engage with language and writing in these courses when there is a cultural incongruency.

Students' Right to Their Own Language and Latinx Students

Perhaps the most controversial debate in developmental and college-level composition courses that has tremendous implications for students of color is the debate over Standard English. Certain myths about college-level writing and academic discourse have conflated correctness and the use of Standard English with quality (Bloom, 2006). Bloom (2006) admits that the adherence to Standard English is problematic, but that it is so codified in our educational practices from kindergarten that it is unlikely to be resisted. Concepts of "Standard" English and Discourses have real implications for college students, particularly those who are historically underserved such as Latinx students, in college English. English and writing instructors are likely among the first people students encounter when they enter college, especially if the students place into developmental writing courses. Lippi-Green (1997) argues in her in-depth examination of the Standard English debate that the concept of "standard" English is essentially a socially constructed myth. When proponents of this concept refer to a certain

type of Standard English, they are referring to the language of the highly educated (Lippi-Green, 1997). Ultimately, this debate is imbued with power, particularly with the intersections of class, race, and access to quality education.

Within the field of composition studies, this discussion of Standard English and its place in postsecondary college writing settings began decades ago. Responding to the growing presence of more students of color entering college in the 1960s and 1970s, the postsecondary branch of the National Council of Teachers of English issued a policy known as "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (hereafter, SRTOL) in 1974 (Smitherman, 2003). The policy flatly rejected any hierarchy of languages and the notion that one dialect of English exerted any domination or correctness over others (Conference on College Composition and Communication [CCCC], 1974). Instead, it upheld language diversity in the United States as a cultural symbol of the country and advocated training and experiences for English teachers who work with students of different linguistic heritages (CCCC, 1972). A later expansion of SRTOL acknowledged that discrimination on the basis of dialect or accent was a reality, but proceeded with the hope that attitudes regarding language and minority dialects would change in favor of pluralistic language.

What is interesting about the scholarly conversations about SRTOL is the willingness to talk about linguistic diversity as a monolithic entity without differentiating specific racial/ethnic groups (e.g., "World Englishes" as described by Cliett, 2003) or to focus specifically on African American Vernacular English (Kinloch, 2005; Smitherman, 1999). Scholars have noted that students of color, like Latinx students, often come from literacy backgrounds that differ from "mainstream" schools and lead to a clash in cultures (White & Lowenthal, 2011), and these differences have been specifically noted in reference to Latinx students' linguistic backgrounds (Baca, 2008; Ybarra, 2001). Given the growth of the Latinx population over the last thirty years (Stepler & Brown, 2016) and the growing prominence of this demographic on college campuses across the country, it is time to consider these students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and how these can be built upon in ways that promote their retention and success in college rather than push them out of postsecondary education altogether.

An Empowerment Framework for Developmental Writing

Given the complexity of Latinx students' needs in developmental writing, there are various ways institutions and programs can build culturally responsive developmental curricula. Building on the work on Ladson-Billings (1995), Pappamihiel and Moreno (2011) make the case of cultural responsive instruction in colleges and universities with the purpose of boosting educational attainment for Latino students specifically. Culturally responsive instruction has four attributes that grow out of critical race theory (CRT): it is validating, multidimensional, comprehensive, and empowering (Pappamihiel & Moreno, 2011). This type of pedagogy provides students with validating experiences (explained by Rendón, 1994), moves away from the "remedial pedagogy" solely focused on skills that is described by Grubb and Gabriner (2013), and empowers students by giving them dignity and respect in the classroom (Pappamihiel & Moreno, 2011).

A similar model for teaching that was developed specifically for the developmental classroom is the multicultural developmental education curricula model (Bruch, Jehangir, Jacobs, & Ghere, 2004). Within this model, cultural diversity is celebrated, power and oppression within society are discussed meaningfully rather than ignored, and education is presented to students as a means of upward social mobility and empowerment. These models call for a central focus on power, oppression, and difference, subjects that are not often combined with Yancey's (2004) aforementioned four C's.

Building on the multicultural developmental education model (Bruch et al., 2004), I call for an Empowerment Framework for Latinx students in developmental education that takes into consideration critical issues related to language and writing. In combining the teaching of skills, educational power structures, and more welcoming perspectives toward students' use of Spanish, the developmental education may be positively transformative for students who might otherwise feel stigmatized or held back by placement policies. However, this change can only occur if there is a meaningful, intentional effort to empower students while they are enrolled in developmental courses in ways that provide knowledge about the power systems they will engage with, how to move in between social worlds, *as well as* building more practical writing skills such as clarity and cohesion. This can be achieved with explicit discussion of the power structure of academia as well as helping students develop themselves as college students without abandoning their other personal identities.

Illuminate the Power Structure in the College

The developmental writing classroom is located at the crossroads of multiple power structures. It is a gatekeeper course to Freshman Composition, which in turn has been called a gatekeeper course (Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Scott, 2012). Students, especially Latinx and other minoritized students, are asked to become part of an academic discourse community that is not only foreign to them but may be hard to make sense of (Ybarra, 2001). White and Lowenthal (2011) are explicit that academic discourse requires engagement with visible and invisible codes of power and the ability to navigate through or grapple with them. What is more, navigating the power structure of institutions through the use of academic discourse is something that is seldom taught explicitly (White & Lowenthal, 2011).

Rather than masking the purpose of developmental education out of fear of disheartening students, faculty members, and other campus agents who work with developmental students (e.g., advisors, support services staff) have the opportunity to enfranchise students with knowledge about the power structure in higher education and how to navigate it. There is a body of literature related to the negative effects of Latinx students' challenges in navigating their college campus (Campa, 2010; Núñez, 2011a), and such explicit intentionality in unmasking the tacit codes of power (White & Lowenthal, 2011) could help students build what Campa (2010) called "critical resilience" (p. 431).

This type of teaching requires open conversations with Latinx students about an educational system that was not built for them. However, students may be able to make sense of what is going on around them once they know the overt and covert parts of the power structure and can think about how to navigate this structure. In her reflective essay, Bernstein (2004) recalls working with Latinx students in the Houston, Texas area and how reading Jonathan Kozol's seminal work *Savage Inequalities* resonated with students who were given the opportunity to reflect upon the educational inequalities they experienced in K-12 schools. Through reading and writing on the topic, the students acquired a way to draw on their experiences in an academic setting and to combine their experiences with academic sources in their final papers. This type of exercise with the combination of critical sources and students' actual lives provides a way to teach students about power and how to break the cycle of inequality and oppression imbued in educational systems.

Build Identities as College Students without Abandoning Other Identities

Teaching Latinx students in developmental education how to navigate power structures is not a proposal to teach them how to assimilate into White, dominant spaces. One criticism of academic discourse in K-12 and postsecondary settings is that it diminishes the power of students' literacy backgrounds, especially their home language practices (Delpit, 1995, 1997; White & Lowenthal, 2011). Rose (1985) argues against deficit-driven concepts of developmental writers' backgrounds that portray them as little more than illiterate. In his critique of academics' notions of underprepared students, Rose (1985) states:

> The problem is that the knowledge these students possess is often incomplete and fragmented and is not organized in ways that they can readily use in academic writing situations. But to say this is not to say that their minds are cultural blank slates. (p. 353)

Put another way, students arrive with a social and culturally rich history and knowledge base that is undervalued in academic settings, but they have a wealth of knowledge and experience that can be drawn from. Rather than teaching students to assimilate, the emphasis should be teaching them to learn to move in between spaces with knowledge and confidence, or how to effectively codeswitch.

Codeswitching is "innovative, inevitably changeable, exploratory, and flexible…It is also a socially binding act, a kind of linguistic glue, and at the same time a method of breaking barriers reducing distance, opening lines of communication" (Kells, 2004, p. 36). Guerra (2004) echoes a similar type of engagement which he terms "transcultural repositioning," or "shape shifting in cultural, linguistic, and intellectual terms" (p. 15). What is useful about Guerra's (2004) definition in particular is that codeswitching here is not just about the use of conversational language; it is also about participating and engaging with others in a variety of spaces. Rather than simply codeswitching between English and Spanish, faculty can teach students how to codeswitch between various discourses (e.g., in their homes, in the classroom, in the workplace) by teaching students how to move between discourses and contexts. Put another way, a faculty member can build on *all* of a students' literacies (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) and discourses across contexts rather than focusing on and privileging academic discourse. The basis of this holistic approach is to help students gain confidence as

capable, confident college students who can coexist as Latinx in a predominantly White space and overcome the challenges of balancing the multiple demands of home and school.

This type of teaching must also be reinforced with the course materials students ultimately read and write on. One of the best programs to model a developmental writing program with a Latinx Studies curriculum is the Puente Program in California community colleges. The program was specifically developed in the 1980s to address the observed lack of success of Latinx students in developmental writing in particular (McGrath & Galaviz, 1996). For over three decades, the program has incorporated a curriculum with Latinx writers and an intentionality for "validating" (Rendón, 1994) and affirming students' rich cultural backgrounds. The research on Ethnic Studies programs has also demonstrated the powerful responses students have when exposed to content that affirms their cultural background (e.g., Núñez, 2011b; Sleeter, 2011).

One final issue that has not yet been fully developed in the literature in building a culturally responsive curriculum for Latinx developmental writers is the place of Spanish in the classroom and in student writing. In the K-12 sector, the growth of the Latinx student population has spurred a growth in dual language programs that provide classroom instruction in English and Spanish (Alanís & Rodriguez, 2008). However, Latinx students in college receive no such instruction in college. Villanueva (2011) argues that teaching academic discourse does not adequately serve the needs of students of color who are learning how to express themselves and their experiences. Villanueva (2011) blends different genres, including narrative and poetry, in his own academic writing and argues that *memoria* invites students to take part in their own writing. The argument here is that academic discourse, in short, stamps out the ethos of students' writing, and Villanueva (2011) advocates bringing it back to students through the use of their own histories. Exploring the relationship between discourses and in helping students understand their dynamics and how to blend them may lead to transformative teaching practices for faculty and writing skills for students. This blending demonstrates that there is beauty and power in a writer's expression across languages, and by untethering expectations away from the Four C's (Yancey, 2004), the door is open for enabling students to shape shift in the academy. This type of teaching also builds students' linguistic capital, or their ability to communicate in more than one method or style (Yosso, 2005).

Recommendations and Conclusions

Since the subject of Latinx developmental writers is underdeveloped, more classroom-based research should be done to capture successful practices in helping students move from developmental education to college-level courses. Many of the practices suggested in this piece, such as the multicultural developmental education model (Bruch et al., 2004), have been described in journal articles as theoretical suggestions, yet empirical pieces describing the execution of these models and exploring their effectiveness is non-existent. It is time to put research into practice.

As a matter of institutional and classroom practice, more action needs to be taken to fully understand the relationship between English as a Second Language (ESL) and developmental writing (and reading) in order to serve the part of the Latinx population who could benefit from these services. Previous research suggests that English Language Learners may have additional obstacles put in front of them as they enter community colleges (Bunch & Panayotova, 2008; Razfar & Simon, 2011), and institutional placement policies should carefully consider how students are assigned to ESL courses and/or developmental writing courses. As more Latinx students enter postsecondary education, it is also advantageous for faculty in writing and reading to obtain professional development related to supporting students' literacy development in both English and Spanish. Two-year and four-year institutions do more to hire faculty of color, especially faculty who are fluent in Spanish, who can serve as visible examples of former college students who successfully navigated through the academic world. Having faculty who are fluent in Spanish also enables the respective faculty members to teach the blending of languages in writing, when such blending is appropriately used, and to affirm the power of being bilingual.

As more Latinx students enter postsecondary institutions, it is crucial that we as a field (researchers, administrators, and campus agents) promote their holistic success, especially in critical points like developmental education, which can promote or hinder progress. Through employing culturally responsive practices that invite students to engage in academic discourse as full participants without asking them to sacrifice their identities, we have the chance to positively shape the experiences of a large sector of the Latinx student population.

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