Latina/o Educational Leadership: *Testimonios* from the Field

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Our schools' growing Latino population requires a drastic shift in how we approach leadership to reflect these changing demographics. When Latina/o students have the lowest levels of educational attainment at every stage of the educational pipeline (Covarrubias, 2011), it is imperative that we question whether we are doing enough to address this crisis. Time and again, research has demonstrated how these torrential leakages in the educational pipeline for Latina/o students are often perpetuated by unequal resource allocation (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Rodriguez & Rolle, 2007; Solórzano, Ledesma, Pérez, Burciaga, & Ornelas, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000). While these outcomes are often mistakenly attributed to Latino families' lack of caring about education (Valencia & Black, 2002; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997), scholars have demonstrated that families and communities play an essential role in students' educational and occupational aspirations (Gándara, 1995; Solórzano, 1986). If we are serious about addressing the needs and strengths represented by the increased presence of Latina/o students, these aspirations must be cultivated—and realized—through the engagement of educational leaders who are committed activists for social change (Guajardo, 2009; Méndez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne Jiménez, & Hernandez, 2015; Rodríguez & Alaníz, 2011; Rodríguez, Martinez, & Valle, 2015) that recognize the community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) that is already present in the communities they serve. The limited notions of Latina/o educational leadership in the field of education have misguided institutions of education (Berta- Ávila, Revilla, & López Figueroa, 2011; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2004) and as a result, maintained and in many cases increased societal inequities and institutionalized oppression (López, 2003; López & Burciaga, 2014; Méndez-Morse, 2000; San Miguel, 2013).

In preparing this issue, we posed two questions: What is Latina/o educational leadership and how is it enacted to challenge the narrow parameters of what is considered educational

leadership? How do we (re)envision educational leadership approaches that are respectful and responsive to Latina/o communities? In this special issue, scholar-educators present *testimonios* from the field—strategies, communities, and concepts that push us to reconsider our current approaches to serving Latina/o Students.

In "*Ternura y Tenacidad*: *Testimonios* of Latina School Leaders," by Melissa A. Martinez, Jocabed Marquez, Yvette Cantu, and Patricia Rocha, the *testimonios* of four Latina school leaders reveal the important role of cultural capital in leadership development, resistance, agency and deep commitments to social justice for Latinx communities.

"*Con Todo Mi Corazón*: Mentoring Latinas in Educational Leadership Doctoral Programs," by Mariela A. Rodriguez, reveals approaches to community-mentoring that supports the research and practice of Latina doctoral students not only for degree completion [but keeping in mind] the importance of preparing the next cadre of school principals and superintendents.

"The Journey from De-Culturalization to Community Cultural Wealth: The Power of a Counter Story-telling Curriculum and How Educational Leaders Can Transform Schools," by P. Antonio Cuevas, outlines the use of personal counter-stories as curriculum to transform educational spaces by engaging students in reclaiming community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) and creating critically and culturally engaging academic opportunities in an otherwise racist and oppressive educational system.

"Institutionally Responsive Pedagogies: A Community-Cultural Wealth Approach to Latina/o Student Engagement across the Educational Pipeline," by Louie F. Rodriguez, provides four concrete pedagogical principles grounded in community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). These principles, used in his work with students, communities, parents, and in K-12 and higher education, outline approaches to institutional shifts to recognize the wealth of Latina/o students and communities across the educational pipeline.

In "Reconceptualizing Leadership in Migrant Communities: Latin@ Parent Leadership Retreats as Sites of Community Cultural Wealth," Pedro E. Nava and Argelia Lara examine leadership development within (im)migrant farmworker communities, and argue for the need to rethink the role of *testimonios* as a pedagogical tool in parent engagement and capacity building for leadership and agency in such communities.

Verónica Nelly Vélez, in her article, "Unexpected Power Brokers: Latina (Im)migrant Mothers, School Decision-Making, and the Racial Politics of Parent Leadership in School

Reform," outlines a participatory action case study of ALIANZA; she also describes the development of political agency among ALIANZA members. Vélez highlights organizational strategies aimed at school reform while strengthening counter-narratives to interrupt racist depictions that functioned to cast Latinx parents as "unfit" to serve as educational leaders.

In "Leadership *for* Chicano/Latino Education and the Politics of Change," Patricia López describes the persistent entrenchment of corporate interests and market-based reform that embody the growing politics of change in the experiences of Chicano/Latino students and broader communities. She continues with university-based leadership programs that play critical roles when it comes to advancing a leadership *for* Chicano/Latino communities that equip candidates with a counter narrative analysis that allows them to first understand these realities, and then identify the strategies they must develop if they are to disrupt the talons of corporate interests in and out of education

Educational efforts to address inequities have increasingly manifested as top-down directives aimed at reductive accountability objectives, thus increasing the power and visibility of certain positional leaders (and profiles of leadership) as the schools' primary change agents. Given the breaks in the educational pipeline for Latina/os, there is an urgency to our work in showcasing scholarship that interrogates the leadership gaps that seem to persist in schooling systems within Latina/o communities (Guajardo, Guajardo, Oliver, & Keawe, 2012). Therefore, we share these seven articles, two poems, and a book review as a response to broadening the narrow conceptualizations of educational leadership.

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