Shattering the Deficit Grand Narrative

TOWARD A CULTURALLY VALIDATING LATINO STUDENT SUCCESS FRAMEWORK

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As the growth of the nation's Latino population continues in dynamic mode—with projections indicating they will be one-third of the nation by 2050—many more colleges and universities will be transformed into Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) whose student body is at least 25 percent Latino. Yet, despite a diverse array of academic and student support services targeting students of color, disparities in educational attainment persist at both the high school and college level. Further, educational attainment data from 2010 show that Mexican Americans were the least educated cohort among Hispanics, with 57 percent graduating from high school (or equivalent), compared to 75 percent for Puerto Ricans and 81 percent for Cubans. In higher education there was a similar scenario: Mexican Americans had lower college completion rates with 11 percent earning a bachelor's degree compared to 18 percent for Puerto Ricans and 26 percent for Cubans (US Bureau of the Census Bureau 2012).

How can these achievement gaps be addressed? This essay contends that deficit-based thinking has become the default perspective in considering low-income students of color. Whereas it would be unthinkable for elite, wealthy colleges and universities to assume deficit-based perspectives regarding their students, views that cast low-income students as deficient, unprepared, and inept not only go widely unchallenged but have become entrenched and normalized. Further, many educators are unfamiliar with Latino social and political histories and how these forces have shaped their students' educational experiences and communities. Nor do educators fully understand or acknowledge the cultural wealth Latinos employ to overcome and survive adversity. The authors of this article believe that

the future of Latino student achievement must be based on an asset-based framework that incorporates a Latino-centric lens. The purposes of this essay are a) to shatter the pervasive deficit-based model that has worked against Latino and other underserved students and 2) to provide two- and four-year college and university educators with a contemporary, culturally validating model of Latino student success.

EMPLOYING ASSET-BASED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Over the past decade, a number of critiques about deficit-based frameworks have expressed the role of racial and class biases in creating entrenched views about low-income students of color, views that pathologize, stereotype, and marginalize these students (Conchas 2006; Valenzuela 1999; Volpp 2000; Valencia 2010, 1997; Moll et al. 2001; Yosso 2005; Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala 2014; Zambrana and Hurtado 2015; Stanton-Salazar 1997). Deficit-based thinking is centered on the grand narrative that parents and Latino communities do not value education, the belief that low-income communities are inferior, and the pervasive view that most, if not all low-income students are "at risk," "marginal learners" and "culturally deprived." Absent from this deficit-based discourse is a focus on Latino cultural wealth and the experiential ways of knowing that students employ to transcend their socioeconomic circumstances, build on their instinct to survive, and excel in education. Below are some asset-based theoretical perspectives intended to dismantle the deficit model of education.

Community Cultural Wealth

Tara Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model represents "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro- and micro-forms of oppression" (77). Employing a Critical Race Theory lens, Yosso posits that cultural capital comes in the following forms:

- Aspirational: "holding on to hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality" (77)
- Linguistic: "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (78)
- Familial: "cultural ways of knowing in the immediate and extended family that maintain a healthy connection to community and its resources" (78)

- Social: "networks of significant others and community resources who provide instrumental and emotional support to navigate through institutions" (78)

- Navigational: "ability to maneuver social institutions which were not created particularly for Communities of Color" (79)

- Resistant: "oppositional behaviors brought forth when Communities of Color recognize and challenge social inequities" (79).

Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala (2014) validated Yosso's model and added four more *ventajas*/assets and *conocimientos*/ways of knowing that Latino students employ to survive, overcome obstacles, and push themselves to complete college. Table 1 presents the combined model.

Scholarly works focusing on Latino students have to a significant extent validated the existence of the cultural strengths listed in Table I (Zambrana and Hurtado 2015; Lozano 2015; Foxen 2015). Additional strengths include the following:

- *Leadership.* Distinctive qualities include a holistic attitude that is oriented toward community and action-oriented, with aims of social activism and coalition building sustained through faith and hope. Latinos seek to push, inspire, motivate and empower others through their actions (Lozano 2015; Beatty 2014; Bordas 2013; Guardia 2015).

- *Resilience.* Many Latino students overcome significant challenges (Kann and Rodríguez 2015; Foxen 2015), such as dealing with racism and deficit views, financial difficulties, learning and navigating a new institutional culture, and dealing with personal challenges.

- *Responsibilidad/Responsibility.* Latino students often take on an obligation to contribute to the family's financial situation and well-being (Suarez 2015). Gender roles include women taking care of their brothers and sisters and young men becoming the "man of the house." Students may also send money home to help with family finances.

Funds of Knowledge

Luis Moll, Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma González (2001) worked with the concept of "funds-of-knowledge," which refers to "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (133). Funds of knowledge is an asset-based theory whereby teachers can become learners and come to know their students and the families of their students in new ways. The theory of funds of knowledge

TABLE 1. Latino student *Ventajas y Conocimientos*

VENTAJAS/ASSETS	CONOCIMIENTOS/FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE
Aspirational	Ability to set high aspirations
	Ability to recognize value of education
	Ability to remain hopeful about the future
Linguistic	Ability to use two or more languages to communicate and to form relationships with others
	Employment of diverse forms of communication skills in multiple contexts
Familial	Modeling the strength and determination of the family
	Ability to use knowledge gained through the value of family *consejos, respeto, testimonios y educación*
	Validation and encouragement from siblings, parents, relatives
Social	Ability to create social networks
	Ability to make new friends and to form new relationships
Resistant	Ability to resist stereotypes and combat micro-aggressions
	Ability to overcome hardships, such as poverty and lack of resources
Ganas/ Perseverance	Ability to develop inner strength, become self reliant and determined to succeed
	Ability to recognize and embrace the sacrifices that must be made to attend college
Ethnic Consciousness	Having cultural pride
	Exhibiting pride in attending an HSI
	Having a deep commitment to Latino community ("giving back")
	Being focused on the betterment of the collective whole
Spirituality/Faith	Turning to faith in God/ higher power
	Having a sense of meaning and purpose
	Understanding the importance of gratitude, goodness, and compassion
Pluriversal	Ability to operate in multiple worlds (college, peers, work, family, native country) and diverse educational and geographical contexts
	Ability to hold multiple and competing systems of meaning in tension in diverse social and educational contexts

Sources: Rendón, Nora, and Kangala 2014, *Ventajas y Conocimientos;* Anzaldúa 2005, Conocimientos; Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González 2001, Funds of Knowledge.

debunks the pervasive, deficit-based notion that linguistically and cultural-ly diverse working-class minority households lack worthwhile knowledge and experiences. When faculty and staff take time to get to know students—to acknowledge and validate their backgrounds, culture, family sacrifices, and the challenges they have overcome, for example—they can view students with more respect and understanding. In the process of working more closely with students, faculty can potentially draw out hidden talents and abilities.

Mestiza Consciousness

In the Latino culture, *mestiza* or *mestizo* means a person of mixed race and cultural heritage, neither fully Spanish nor fully indigenous. In her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Latina feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) argues that the mixture provides an advantage: when two or more genetic streams "are constantly 'crossing over,' this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollination, an 'alien' consciousness is presently in the making—a new *mestiza* consciousness, *una conciencia de mujer*. It is a consciousness of the Borderlands (99)."

Anzaldúa recognizes the "psychic restlessness" that can occur as a result of occupying liminal spaces, of being neither here nor there, of being in a state of seemingly perpetual transition, and of living between two cultures. This state she calls *nepantla*. The shadow side of nepantla is that it is messy, confusing and chaotic: individuals are removed from familiar contexts to those that are unknown. Yet, nepantla can also be the threshold space where transformation can occur, where new knowledge emerges, worldviews are shattered, personal growth is realized, and new identities emerge. Many Latino students are of mixed ancestry, have lived in their homeland and in the United States, speak more than one language, have experienced dislocation and relocation and cultural collision, and often find themselves straddling more than one culture in their families, work, colleges, peers, and relationship to their native country. A consequence of these varied experiences is that the *mestiza* develops such strengths as tolerance for ambiguities and contradictions, adaptability in more than one culture, and the capacity to operate in a pluralistic mode. Students who share this *mestiza* consciousness mode are pluriversal and exercise a significant strength that goes beyond dualistic thinking (this/that; us/them) to embrace a collective consciousness that heals the wounds of separation and seeks connections and points of agreement.

Pedagogies of the Home

Drawing on the work of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Dolores Delgado Bernal (2001) expands the concept of "*mestiza* consciousness" to "include how a student balances, negotiates, and draws from her bilingualism, bicultural-ism, commitment to communities, and spiritualties. With this lens, what are often perceived as deficits for Chicana students—limited English pro-ficiency, inferior cultural/religious practices, or too many non-university responsibilities—can be understood as cultural assets or resources that Chicano students bring to higher education" (628). Pedagogies of the home comprise the communication, practices and learning that can occur within the home and community. This constitutes the cultural knowledge base and strategies of resistance that students employ to survive in educa-tional systems that are alien to them and that often cast students within deficit-minded frameworks.

Validation

Validation theory (Rendón 1994; Linares-Rendón and Muñoz 2011) provides an asset-based approach to working with students in a way that recognizes and affirms students as knowledgeable and capable of college-level work, and builds supportive relationships between validating agents and students. Validation theory stresses the importance of authentic affir-mation, support and encouragement from family members, and in- and out-of-class validating agents (faculty, student affairs staff, coaches, advis-ers), and considers the whole as critical to student success. Validation is an enabling, confirming, and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that fosters academic and personal development (Rendón 1994), and it exists in two forms:

- *Academic.* In- and out-of-class validating agents assist students in learning to trust their innate capacity to learn and in acquiring the confidence to be a college student.
- *Interpersonal.* In- and out-of-class validating agents take action to foster students' personal development and social adjustment.

Validation, when administered early in students' transition to college, and consistently throughout their college experience, may be the key to helping students get involved and believing they can learn and achieve their goals (Rendón 1994).

Liberatory Pedagogy

Scholars such as Freire (1970), Rendón (2009), hooks (1994), Shahjahan (2005), and Lather (1991) have proposed epistemological arguments that education should incorporate an inclusive curriculum, be relationship-centered, honor diverse ways of knowing, and take action against colonization and other forms of oppression. This education should also focus on social justice, interdependence, diversity, sustainability, and human rights, endorse students' ability to think critically about their educational situations, and welcome student voices in the classroom. A liberatory pedagogy rejects what Freire (1970) calls the banking model of education, wherein students, who are presumed to be deprived of knowledge, wait to have experts "deposit" knowledge in their vacuous minds. For example, Rendón's (2009) *Sentipensante* [Sensing/Thinking] *Pedagogy* offers a pedagogic model that views individuals as whole human beings, connects inner and outer learning, deeply engages the learner through the use of contemplative practices, promotes the acquisition of both knowledge and wisdom, and emphasizes activism, liberation, healing and social change. Students are assisted to find their self-worth, identity, sense of purpose and voice—key assets needed to succeed in college.

TOWARD A CONTEMPORARY FRAMEWORK OF LATINO STUDENT SUCCESS

Newly developed, culturally validating student success initiatives must be grounded in the experiences, strengths, and culture of Latino students and not on models that were framed with middle- and upper-class majority students in mind. Latino students are succeeding in their own way, employing their own ways of knowing, tools for academic survival, and resistance strategies to take them to the finish line of college completion. Table 2 outlines key differences between dominant models and the proposed Culturally Validating Latino Student Success Framework. Examples of institutional policies and practices that align with the proposed framework are also provided. Institutional agents are encouraged to engage as reflective practitioners to generate innovative strategies that will leverage Latino student success.

Theory

In the 1970s and 1980s, research on student retention began to catch the attention of higher education faculty and student affairs administrators.

TABLE 2. Comparison: Dominant success framework and culturally validating Latino student success framework

	DOMINANT MODEL	CULTURALLY VALIDATING FRAMEWORK	INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES & PRACTICES
Theory	Deficit-based understanding of students; deficit grand narrative unchallenged Definition of success based on emulating experiences of white middle- and upper-class students Academic and social integration/involvement required for success Primary focus of change is student	Establishes asset-based understanding of students Focuses on aligning institutional policies and practices with student ways of knowing Recognizes cultural wealth, allowing students to succeed in their own way Fosters success through validating agents who work with ethic of care, support, and affirmation Places primary focus on critical role of institution's faculty and staff to foster success	Develops asset-based framework for student success Employs asset-based theories to serve as foundation for academic and student affairs programs Provides professional development for faculty and staff to serve as validating agents and to develop an asset-based understanding of students
Historical/Political	Apolitical Little or no discussion of history and oppressive structures Equity not an explicit concern	Recognizes Latino history in state and local community Recognizes significant inequities that impact Latinos (poverty, segregated schooling, school finance inequalities, etc.) Places equity and ethnic/racial justice at the forefront of concern	Assesses history of local and state community Gives consideration to quality of schooling; history of inequality; extent that the institution is focused on equity as well as ethnic/racial justice
Transition to College	Linear transition Cultural aspects of transition not considered	Accepts nonlinear, messy, multidirectional, transitional process Considers cultural aspects of liminality, separation anxiety, dislocation and relocation, as well as dealing with microaggressions	Develops programming that assists students to make the transition to college, for example, Center for the Transition to College Develop programming that assists students to navigate and decode the world of college
Institutional Culture	Race-neutral Overlooks difference and race/ethnic inequalities	Is culturally validating Accounts for difference Builds community, tolerance, acceptance and sense of belonging	Establishes principles of community Implements programs that foster sense of belonging Trains professional staff to deal with issues of equity, difference and social justice

	DOMINANT MODEL	CULTURALLY VALIDATING FRAMEWORK	INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES & PRACTICES
Student Support Services	Inconsiderate of the needs of changing student demographics Unwelcoming campus traditions and practices that perpetuate covert and/or overt racist ideologies	Develops culturally relevant student affairs practices that cater to the co-curricular, social, cultural and emotional needs of students Creates residential identity based learning communities Develops strategic academic affairs partnerships to ensure Latino student success	Develops Latino student-centric programs that value and validate diversity of cultures Demonstrates commitment to Latino student success by hiring Latino staff and institutional leaders who can support students
Pedagogy	Expert model Faculty distance themselves from students Monocultural curriculum; excludes equity and social justice themes Focus on individual student achievement Student voice not considered Singularly focused on intellectual development and academic knowledge	Implements relational model: co-creation and multidirectional flow of knowledge Uses faculty as in- and out-of-class validating agents Includes multicultural and inclusive curriculum Emphasizes community of learners Welcomes student voice and experience Considers Latino ways of knowing/conocimientos Strives for holistic student development (intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual)	Provides professional development to faculty and staff to: Focus on Latino HIPs (High-impact practices)—applied learning, learning communities, contemplative pedagogy, Latino studies, study groups, service learning, research with faculty member, etc. Design curricula that is inclusive and multicultural Design relationship-centered classrooms
Assessment	Data presented in aggregate Excludes equity concerns	Student achievement data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and gender Equity-minded	Conducts assessment of student assets Involves faculty and staff in collecting, assessing, and learning from data

Source: *California Statewide Student Success Scorecard*, 2015.

Much of this early research (Tinto 1975; 1987; Astin 1984) posed the notion that persistence toward graduation was a linear process that assumed the most successful students were those able to become academically and socially integrated and involved with the institution. More recently, "student engagement" (Kuh 2001; Kuh et al. 2008) has become the buzzword for student success. These early theoretical views of student persistence are

widely accepted, enjoy paradigmatic status, and continue to play a dominant role in higher education. Nonetheless, scholars have critiqued student success theories for failing to challenge the deficit-based grand narrative, which excludes the experience of students of color in the framing of early theoretical perspectives, overlooks structural inequalities that have worked against low-income students and families, and fails to interrogate the assumptions regarding assimilation that underlie these perspectives. These scholarly critiques also take issue with research that overly emphasizes the role of the student—as opposed to the responsibility of the institution—to account for success. Critiques also question the misguided assumption that all students, regardless of social background and economic resources, must find ways to get involved/integrated/engaged and that in fact this is the only way to achieve educational success.

Absent from this entrenched discourse is the fact that many low-income students have to work to help the family survive and that they have multiple demands on their lives that preclude full engagement (Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora 2000; Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala 2014; Hurtado, 2006; Cantú 2006; Zambrana and Hurtado, 2015). The fact that many of these students do succeed pushes educators to take into account the other assets and alternatives those students must have employed and the various other ways and measures for attaining success, which are not acknowledged or well understood.

The proposed Culturally Validating Latino Student Success Framework dismantles the deficit-based grand narrative and poses the consideration that students have cultural wealth they employ to succeed in their own way. The key to Latino success is not so much that the student takes the initiative to get academically and socially involved. Instead, it must be considered that students can succeed in engaging their own ways of knowing and coming into contact with those colleges and universities that marshal their faculty, staff and institutional resources to assist them to become achievers.

Specifically, students can succeed by attending to the following suggestions:

1. Employing their reservoir of cultural assets. Accordingly, institutional agents are called to understand, validate, and leverage the array of Latino student strengths (see Table 1).

2. Working toward supportive, affirming interactions with in- and out-of-class validating agents. College faculty and staff must be validating champions for students both in and out of class and throughout their college experience. With an ethic of authentic care, validating agents (faculty, counselors, advisers, coaches, tutors, mentors) can assist students' transition to college. Among the elements of support are these:

help them to access resources, navigate and negotiate the academic and sociocultural aspects of the institution, overcome micro-aggressions, develop a sense of belonging, bring their voice and experience to the classroom environment, and acquire confidence in their ability to be successful college students (Center for Community College Engagement, 2014; Rendón-Linares and Muñoz 2011). Indeed, "institutional agents" (Stanton-Salazar 1997) can serve to empower students as agents share knowledge, resources and opportunities needed to decode institutional bureaucracy, language, values, conventions and traditions that are unfamiliar to first-generation, low-income students.

3. Participating in building engaged colleges and universities that marshal diverse, interconnected programs in their academic, social and cultural ecosystem and gear them toward student success. Institutions should ensure that policies, practices and behaviors are aligned with Latino ways of knowing.

Historical and Political Frameworks

Early student retention models and theories were largely, if not exclusively, apolitical. They excluded historical and political forces that have created social and racial injustices and inequitable conditions for students of color. Understanding this helps to contextualize the Latino education experience. More recent views are cognizant that the Latino cultural experience includes a history of successes in overcoming poverty, poor schooling, racial subordination, discrimination, and violence. These societal forms of oppression are very difficult to deal with and to overcome, yet many examples exist of Latino men and women who did just that (Zambrana and Hurtado 2015; Valenzuela 1999; Hurtado 2006).

Transition to College

Key characteristics of early student retention models were based on assumptions of linearity. Simply put, the transition to college was thought to be marked by the student initially separating from personal cultural realities to incorporate into the academic and social fabric of the institution. The result of this integration was deemed to be student success. More recent views argue that the transition to college is not linear. In fact, the educational trajectory of students of color is often messy, with students moving back and forth from college to their personal worlds of home, work, community, native country, and peers (Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala 2014; Hurtado 2006; Jalomo 1995).

In a study of Latino student college completion Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala (2014) found that Latino students operated "*entre mundos*" (in multiple worlds), including their personal worlds and the new world of college. In doing so, students dealt with the following complex dynamics:

Liminality. A liminal space is an "in-between" space, where students can find themselves caught and pulled toward more than one way of being and doing. It can also be the experience of feeling that one is neither here nor there, *ni aquí, ni allá.* During the early transition to college, students are trying to adapt to a new world while staying connected to their old one. They can experience both the "highs" of excitement about being in college and learning new things and the "lows" of loneliness and doubt about whether college is really worth it and really for them.

Choque/Cultural collision. As students move from their familiar cultural realities to the foreign context of college, they can experience what Anzaldúa (1999) calls *un choque,* or a cultural collision. This is substantiated by scholars (Boyte 2014; Putman 2015; Stephens et al. 2012; Rendón, Jalomo, and Nora 2000) who have noted that there are cultural mismatches between low-income and upper-class cultural norms that can create a social performance gap and reproduce social inequalities. For instance, norms such as "doing your own thing," and "realizing your own potential" can run counter to the values of first-generation students, who typically focus on "giving back" and "collective success." Further, the world of college includes academic values and conventions such as merit and independence, along with specific formal and informal forms of language expression, codes of behavior, and belief systems that are often foreign to first-generation, low-income students.

Separation anxiety. Loneliness, depression, and guilt can occur when students feel that they can no longer stay closely connected to family and friends who choose not to leave their home communities.

Dislocation and relocation. Students can experience multiple forms of geographical or educational dislocation and relocation as they transition to college: breaking away from high school, transferring from a community college, moving from one state to another, or moving from their native country to the United States.

Micro-aggressions. For students of color, navigating a new college world often involves experiences with racial and gender micro-aggressions (Minikel-

Lacocque 2012; Sue 2010). Micro-aggressions can include being made to feel embarrassed for playing Spanish music or speaking Spanish, being treated as a cultural outsider, being laughed at for cooking ethnic foods in a residence hall, being made fun of because of an accent, or being made to feel as though as a Latino, one is not as smart as white students.

Institutional Culture

The race-neutral view of an institution that does not account for difference can serve to discounting, masking, and overlooking diverse student cultures, communities, and experiences (Dowd and Bensimon 2015; Harper and Hurtado 2007). The Latino community is quite diverse and includes biracial and multiracial students. Other forms of diversity include sexuality, gender, military status, religion, age, political affiliation and ability. The essentialist framing of the term "Latino" can mask these complexities and nuances. What is needed is a validation-rich institutional culture that accounts for difference while building community. The culture should also foster a sense of belonging, critically engage questions of inequalities and race and social injustices, validate minoritized students, and build on student assets (Malcom-Piqueux and Bensimon 2015).

Student Support Services

As the demographic diversity at institutions of higher educations increases across the nation, departments of student affairs, which have a long history of advocacy for underserved and underrepresented student populations, need to adapt and transform their functions and practices. This is particularly true in communities that have witnessed significant demographic growth in the Latino population. Community colleges, which have traditionally served students of color, are witnessing an increased enrollment of Latino students, and in the process, attaining Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation (Núñez, Crisp, and Elizondo 2016). In concert with faculty-driven pedagogies that ensure academic success, student affairs professionals should consider embracing culturally relevant practices that attend to the co-curricular, social, cultural, and emotional needs of Latino students. These may include developing learning communities that create a collaborative environment and a sense of belonging through validating experiences (Jehangir, Williams, and Jeske 2012); transforming academic advising practices to meet the unique needs of first-generation, low-income Latino students; expanding outreach to engage Latino families and com-

munities in the recruitment of Latino youth to attend college; supportive cultural centers that cater to the social and cultural needs of Latino students; and communicating with families using bilingual resources (Pérez and Ortiz 2014). Institutions should also consider diversifying their student services staff by hiring more Latinos, who could serve as mentors and role models to students.

Pedagogy

Dominant pedagogic views adhere to the expert model, in which faculty tend to distance themselves from students and maintain a monocultural curriculum. The focus is on individual student achievement, to the exclusion of student voice, and is accompanied by a singular focus on intellectual development. In contrast, culturally validating pedagogic perspectives are relationship-centered, inclusive, and multicultural. A community of learners is created and faculty engage as validating agents who provide support, encouragement, and affirmation. The curriculum includes a focus on racial and social justice, and there is an effort to incorporate student voice and cultural experience. Faculty adhere to holistic student development, attending to intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of academic and developmental student growth (Center for Community College Engagement 2014; Freire 1970; Rendón 2009).

Assessment

The entrenched model of student and institutional assessment focuses on collecting data to assess student learning and institutional performance. In fact, performance-based standards of excellence have recently taken center stage. Colleges and universities are rewarded, for example, on the extent to which they can document gains in student course completion, credit attainment, and degree completion. However, a singular focus on performance can have the effect of masking equity issues behind data. Malcom-Piqueux and Bensimon (2015) propose that examining educational outcomes for Latino students is central to institutional assessment practices. They propose that institutional leaders (presidents, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and directors of divisions and programs) should be attentive to the following assessment practices: disaggregation of educational outcome data by race/ethnicity and gender; the adoption of metrics of equity and their application to disaggregated student outcomes; engagement in performance benchmarking to set equity goals in

specific educational outcomes; and the implementation of model practices of equity-minded data interpretation. Accordingly, new equity-minded data collection practices should be guided by both performance and equity considerations and include equity metrics for Latinos as well as for other student cohorts (Malcom-Piqueux and Bensimon 2015).

WORKING WITH LATINO STUDENTS' *CONOCIMIENTOS*/WAYS OF KNOWING

The "Culturally Validating Latino Student Success Framework" described in this essay may be employed as a model to assist two- and four-year institutions to transform academic and student support programs and align them toward Latino students' ways of knowing. Steps toward this outcome include the following:

Provide Extensive Faculty and Staff Development

This training and development should focus on understanding Latino cultural wealth and leveraging Latino student assets, becoming in- and out-of-class validating agents, designing a holistic, culturally relevant pedagogy, considering cultural issues and challenges inherent in the transition to college, facilitating the navigational aspects of learning a new academic culture, and becoming adept in conducting equity-minded assessment practices.

Design Innovative Latino-Centered Practices of High Impact

High-impact practices include experiential and deep learning, applied learning, internships, validation, learning communities, service learning, capstone courses, and research with a faculty member (Kuh 2008; Rendón-Linares and Muñoz 2011; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). These practices can have a significant impact on all students regardless of ethnic/racial background. In addition there are Latino-centered programs and strategies that can have high impact on student learning, socialization, and leadership development, as well as academic and personal growth. These include Culturally Validating Contemplative Experiences that involve deep teaching and learning experiences wherein students can connect their culture to course material; find self worth, purpose, and voice; and acquire the knowledge and wisdom needed to ensure holistic student development. The idea is to go beyond academic understandings and to allow students to develop their emotional, social, and inner-life skills as they seek to build on

their ethnic consciousness and become transformative social justice agents. This kind of learning experience can take place in learning communities such as service-learning and arts-based projects that incorporate music, poetry, and the visual arts (Rendón, 2009). For instance, Pulido (2002) and Kanagala and Rendón (2013) have employed what they call the "*cajitas* project," in which students construct boxes that are cultural representations of their history, family, and life experiences. Rooted in liberatory pedagogy and practice, this project allows for deep reflection, self-examination, and mindful learning. The future of teaching and learning calls for much needed culturally validating innovations that foster student academic learning and personal development.

Create Ethnic-Themed Learning Communities

The Puente Project has a long-standing history as an exemplary learning community in two-year colleges and high schools in California and Texas. The Puente model combines accelerated instruction in reading and writing, counseling and a course in student success techniques, and one-on-one mentoring by community role models (http://catchthenext.org/our-program/).

Latino Student Support Programming

Examples include culturally relevant spaces of support: multicultural centers, Latino fraternities and sororities, Latino cultural centers, Latino leadership retreats, intergroup dialogues, and ethnic studies courses. These kinds of programs can facilitate student academic and personal growth as well as leadership development. Programs can assist students who struggle with how to navigate the world of college as they work through issues of identity development, deal with campus micro- and macro-aggressions, and foster *hermandad/*brotherhood and sisterhood (Lozano 2015; Guardia 2015).

CONCLUSION

The next generation of student success programming must work with Latino students by employing an asset-based foundation that is aligned with their ways of knowing and with contemporary research that speaks to the experience of Latino students in society and in higher education. The fact that after at least 30 years of research and practice Latinos are still trailing white students in terms of college access and completion speaks to the notion that some aspects of the dominant models employed to foster suc-

cess are simply not working. Further, they may be inappropriate or even harmful for Latino students. What is needed is a validating, Latino-centric student success framework that locates two- and four-year institutions at the center of shaping innovative solutions and making transformative changes in academic and student support services. As we experience the browning of American higher education and a growing populace destined to shape the nation's economic and political future, the challenge of ensuring Latinos' success in college must be addressed in ways that lead to breakthroughs and novel advances in study and practice.

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