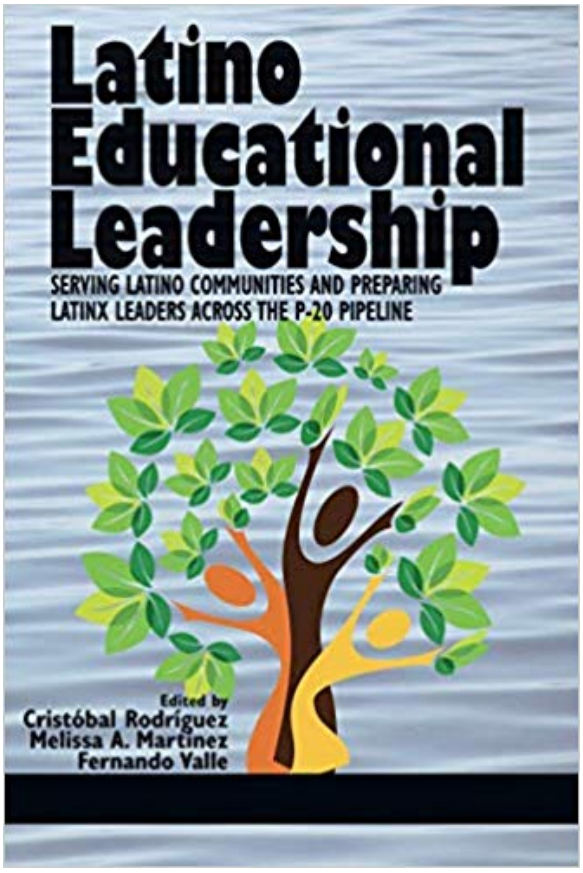
BOOK REVIEW
Latino Educational Leadership: Serving Latino Communities and Preparing Latinx Leaders Across the P-20 Pipeline

By: Cristóbal Rodríguez, Melissa A. Martinez, and Fernando Valle

Reviewer: Mónica Medina, Ph.D. student, University of Texas at San Antonio



The Latinx population is the fastest growing demographic in the United States, yet still lags in graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, and completion rates behind their non-Hispanic White and Black counterparts. Cristóbal Rodríguez, Melissa A. Martinez, and Fernando Valle (2018) use their book to bring light to those serving Latino communities and preparing Latinx leaders in an anti-deficit manner. As opposed to focusing on the challenges Latino communities face, they highlight various methods used to disrupt current policy and practice within the P-20 pipeline. Rodríguez, Martinez, and Valle are Assistant Professors at Howard University, Texas State University, and Texas Tech University, respectively. They are Latinx educational leaders who collaborated to edit this book as a call to action for Latinx leaders in K-12 and higher education to advocate, empower, and transform Latinx experiences throughout the P-20 pipeline and beyond.

The collection of essays found in the book is a compilation of individual as well as collaborative efforts which draw upon Latino-oriented methodologies and epistemologies. Some chapters focus on the experiences of Latinx leaders, while others focus on the actions they take in the education setting. Other chapters focus on in-depth case studies of practices and programs for Latinx students. Additionally, another chapter provides asset-based theoretical models for building the Latino educational leadership pipeline. The authors of each chapter range from practitioners in K-20 to tenured scholars and future scholars and practitioners, each of whom have their own perspective on the terms Latino and Latinx.

Given the recent popularity in usage of the gender inclusive term Latinx versus the traditional binary Latino/a, Rodríguez, Martinez, and Valle use the first chapter to explicitly state their position on using each word for the purpose of this book. After much research, deliberation, and collaboration, it was decided the term Latino would be used when referring to larger community/group applications and concepts, as exemplified in the first part of the book title. The term Latinx is also used; however, it is used in reference to individual-level applications, as demonstrated in the latter part of the book title. Throughout the remaining chapters, individual authors or groups of authors choose to use the term they see fit. To mirror what the readers will see in the book, I will reference the terms accordingly here.

While the majority of the book tends to lean toward the higher education audience, much of what is discussed is applicable to pre-service and in-service Latinx leaders at the K-12 and higher education level. Each author points out the disturbingly low and disproportionate rates of Latinx leaders in positions of power, despite the rising number of Latinx students in the U.S. education system. The lack of access to higher education for Latinx youth is alarming, and this collection of authors work to change this narrative

with their *testimonios*, case studies, and discussions. In addition, Martínez and Fernández (2018) argue that "colleges are tied to the social mobility of women, veterans, and more recently students of color. Thus, higher education must be intentional in creating pathways and pipelines for leadership that are inclusive of the Latino experience" (p. 112). The specific tie to women in the Latino community was greatly appreciated and is highly needed as the number of Latina leaders is even fewer than that of men. By telling the stories—the *testimonios*—of *mujeres*, we can work to shift the male-dominated Latino community to a more inclusive Latinx community.

In the same chapter, Martínez and Fernández (2018) present "Edith's Testimonio: Calluses On Our Hands," a poem Fernández wrote as a part of her dissertation dedication. The poem is a moving sentiment that speaks to the unknown struggle Latina/os face but often cannot relate to their parents. The notion of living between two worlds is a common experience for members of the Latino community who persevere through college, whether undergraduates or at the graduate level. Martínez also uses her mother's *consejos* to speak to the common myth that many fall victim to regarding education as something that equals success. She stated, "*Mi mamá* would say no one could take away my education. She didn't say education was an equalizer. Maybe she knew better." This speaks volumes about what an education means for the Latino community and the education system that caters to them.

Universities are often quick to enroll more Latinx students, sometimes even earning the title Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI); however, the institutions continue to lack the cultural knowledge and professors of color to create a space or ensure equitable success for the community. Some higher education institutions, though, are working diligently and intentionally to ensure Latinx leaders are provided with opportunities that cater to their needs, and lead to their success.

The book iterates the necessity to increase access to university classes. Niño, Garza, Jr., and Rodríguez (2018) discuss a major contribution they made to reach a community that had historically been denied access to higher education. By establishing partnerships, collaborating with small town districts, and forming a committee committed to creating an equitable experience for Latinx leaders, the authors were able to "recruit, retain, and advance Latinos with a doctoral degree in an area that traditional[ly] has been marginalized by institutions of higher education" (p. 54). The model used to make the doctoral program accessible is one that many other universities can follow and implement. Similarly, Rodríguez (2018) explicitly laid out three pedagogical approaches professors could use to provide future leaders with opportunities to reflect on their practice and put social justice-oriented approaches in their toolbox for ongoing use. I especially appreciated this chapter because of the applicability to both higher education as well as K-12 leaders, as there were few chapters that emphasized the K-12 area.

In terms of chapters regarding the K-12 side of education, the authors acknowledged the cultural wealth Latinx families come with and advocated for their needs through active listening, and eliminating the third-party translator when possible (Lowery & Romero-Johnson, 2018). Niño (2018) discussed his study, which documented the experiences of Latino superintendents. While the role of the superintendent or any educational leader should serve the needs of all students, the book notes that one should not be colorblind in doing so. This is a valid point. By being colorblind we continue to push the historically marginalized Latino community further to the edges by disregarding and devaluing the experiences they come with. Instead, leaders must be cognizant of what Latinx future leaders come with and how that is of value to our education system for students and leaders within the P-20 pipeline.

Nearly every chapter stresses the importance of cultural values, familial roots and *consejos*, and leaders of color as role models as critical pieces of the puzzle leading to the resiliency needed for Latinx leaders to succeed. However, while many current leaders in educational institutions espouse these qualities, the reality remains that they often do not practice it. The various frameworks utilized throughout the book are all critically applied to viewing and thinking about how they serve the Latino community. Shifting one's mindset and thinking critically about decisions affecting Latinx youth and future Leaders will help to create a change in practice.

In Conclusion

The goal of this book was a call to action and also served as a "*ventana*" (Byrne-Jimenez, 2018) to explore how various research, including *testimonios* of Latinx leaders within the P-20 pipeline, have advocated for Latino communities in hopes of helping others step up and create change for Latinx families who have been too frequently marginalized. However, I will offer a few critiques for criticality. Considering that the title of this book included a focus on the P-20 pipeline, the authors could have included more pieces relevant or applicable to the K-12 organizations. Currently, it leans more to the higher education side, leaving ambiguity for addressing Latinx leadership in K-12. In addition, more *testimonios* could have been shared, as these moving voices tend to be the most compelling. This would also serve as an effort to normalize *testimonios* as legitimate research since they are frequently overlooked. Last, while the editors felt the term Latino was embraced by the community, we felt use of the term was an attempt to be politically correct and can be confusing. Referring to a community as Latino implies power in the masculine role. Referring to leaders and students as Latinx implies inclusivity. The use of Latinx leaders in a Latino community suggests women can be independent leaders, but when grouped together with men in a community setting the male role will continue to dominate, ultimately perpetuating the male power

dynamic. Though the book could have benefitted from more essays involving K-12 leadership, more *testimonios*, and consistent use of inclusive terminology, this was a great read that addresses critical issues.

Overall, the book is filled with critical actions and paradigm shifts needed to enact change for the experiences of Latinx leaders within the P-20 pipeline. Ultimately, this book will critically inform leadership practice with respect to the historically marginalized Latino community.

References

Byrne-Jiménez, M. (2018). Afterword. In Rodriguez, C., Martinez, M. A., & Valle, F. *Latino educational leadership: Serving Latino communities and preparing Latinx leaders across the p-20 pipeline* (pp. 221 – 223). North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.

Lowery, K. & Romero-Johnson, S. (2018). Advocacy in Practice: Factors that Influence Latinx School Leaders' Advocacy for Increasing Educational Access for Latinx Students and Families. In Rodriguez, C., Martinez, M. A., & Valle, F. *Latino educational leadership: Serving Latino communities and preparing Latinx leaders across the p-20 pipeline* (pp. 179 – 199). North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.

Martínez, M. & Fernández, E. (2018). Moving Toward a Reconceptualization of Latina/o Leadership in Higher Education. In Rodriguez, C., Martinez, M. A., & Valle, F. *Latino educational leadership: Serving Latino communities and preparing Latinx leaders across the p-20 pipeline* (pp. 97 – 119). North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.

Niño, J.M., Garza, Jr., E., & Rodríguez, M. A. (2018). Making a Difference: Evidence From the Field. In Rodriguez, C., Martinez, M. A., & Valle, F. *Latino educational leadership: Serving Latino communities and preparing Latinx leaders across the p-20 pipeline* (pp. 39 – 55). North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.

Rodríguez, L. F. (2018). A Testimonio Rooted in the Community: Three Pedagogical Approaches to Develop Equity-Minded Educational Leaders for and with the Latina/o/x Community. In Rodriguez, C., Martinez, M. A., & Valle, F. *Latino educational leadership: Serving Latino communities and preparing Latinx leaders across the p-20 pipeline* (pp. 159 – 177). North Carolina: Information Age Publishing.