

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS

## Decolonizing Leadership Practices: Towards Equity and Justice at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Emerging HSIs (eHSIs)

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### Abstract

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs; colleges and universities that enroll at least 25% Raza undergraduates) are increasing in number in the United States, growing rapidly from 189 in 1994 to 492 in 2016. Moreover, there were 333 emerging HSIs (eHSIs) in 2016, indicating that the number of HSIs will continue to grow; however, leaders, including faculty, staff, and administrators at (e) HSIs, continue to grapple with the question, "How do we move from 'enrolling' to 'serving' Raza students?" There are a lack of leadership frameworks specifically designed for those working at (e)HSIs and with a focus on serving Raza students. The authors argue that decolonizing leadership practices will help leaders liberate and empower Raza students by disrupting the coloniality of power that promotes and sustains higher education institutions as racial/colonial projects. The authors propose leadership processes for working with Raza students at (e)HSIs. Although leaders at non-(e)HSIs may consider these processes, the authors call on leaders at (e)HSIs to transform their leadership practices as a necessity for becoming Raza-serving.

**Keywords:** Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Raza college students, transformative leadership, decolonization, coloniality of power

### Decolonizing Leadership Practices: Towards Equity and Justice at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Emerging HSIs (eHSIs)

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), which are enrollment driven, non-profit, postsecondary institutions that enroll at least 25% Raza<sup>1</sup> full-time equivalent (FTE) students, are increasing in number each year as the number of Raza college students grows proportionately with their overall population in the United States. HSIs were officially recognized by the federal government in 1992, following a long political battle in which leaders of postsecondary institutions enrolling the largest percentage of Raza college students and legislators fought for the designation (Santiago, 2006; Valdez, 2015). HSIs became eligible for federal funding in 1995, with the goal of building institutional capacity to better serve Raza students (Santiago, 2006). By fall 2016, there were 492 institutions that met the criteria to be eligible for the HSI designation, which is approximately 15% of all postsecondary institutions in the U.S. (*Excelencia in Education*, 2018b).

<sup>1</sup> We use the term "Raza" instead of "Latina/o/x" or "Hispanic" to refer to people who have Indigenous roots in Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. In using this term we recognize that this racial/ethnic group evolved as a result of colonization, rape, and subjugation of Indigenous peoples. In using the term "Raza," we also center our analysis on race, with "Raza" translating to "race."

Moreover, there were 333 institutions that enrolled between 15-24% FTE Raza college students, which *Excelencia* in Education (2018a) calls, “emerging HSIs” (eHSIs). The number of (e)HSIs suggests that the percentage of institutions that reach the threshold for becoming designated as HSIs will continue to grow in the near future. Yet leaders, including faculty, staff, administrators, at (e)HSIs<sup>2</sup> continue to grapple with the question, “How do we move from ‘enrolling’ to ‘serving’ Raza students?”

This question arises as a result of Raza college students lagging behind their white counterparts in graduation, completion, and enrollment in advanced degree programs (NCES, 2017). Even at (e)HSIs, there are discrepancies in graduation, completion, and transfer rates between white and Raza students (Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Garcia, 2018b). Although scholars have proposed numerous reasons as to why Raza students continue to earn degrees in fewer numbers than their white peers (e.g., Villalpando, 2004), we argue that the history of oppression and subjugation that Raza have experienced as a result of colonization and U.S. imperialism have prevented them from excelling in postsecondary education. We fully recognize that colonization has affected Indigenous people across the world, yet here we focus on Raza in the U.S. context.

Arguably, (e)HSI leaders must deconstruct colonial ways of being that are embedded within institutions of higher education, historically and systemically, in order to effectively serve Raza (Patton, 2016; Wilder, 2013). In reviewing the literature centered on (e)HSIs, there are a lack of leadership frameworks specifically designed for those working at (e)HSIs. Raza college students have specific needs that leaders at these campuses must consider, but there are no specific models to help them become effective leaders for Raza. This is particularly troubling, as Raza are underrepresented in leadership positions at (e)HSIs (Contreras, 2018;

Garcia, 2019; Gonzales, 2015; Santos & Acevedo-Gil, 2013). For example, in fall 2015 at one four-year HSI in the Midwest where 35% of the undergraduate population identified as Raza, only 11% of the faculty and 18% of the administration identified as such (Garcia, 2018b, 2019). At another four-year HSI in the Midwest in the same year, only 2% of the faculty and 7.5% of the administration identified as Raza, compared to 27% of the undergraduate population (Garcia, 2018b, 2019). There has been a call to increase the representation of Raza leaders at HSIs (e.g., Contreras, 2018; Gonzales, 2015), yet in this article we call on all leaders at (e)HSIs, even non-Raza leaders, to reconsider their leadership practices in order to center Raza students. In this article, we propose processes and practices for decolonizing leadership at (e)HSIs, with the goal of promoting equitable outcomes, liberatory environments, and justice for all. Although leaders at non-(e)HSIs may consider these processes, we call on leaders at (e)HSIs to transform their leadership practices as a necessity for becoming Raza-serving and Raza-liberating, particularly since HSIs alone enroll 65% of all Raza college students (*Excelencia* in Education, 2018b).

### Conceptual Foundation

To understand how decolonization theory can be used to develop leaders that transform (e)HSIs, we first provide a brief overview of Raza’s unique history of colonization, then we discuss the idea of “coloniality of power” as a theoretical foundation, and finally discuss how colonialism has played out in educational settings, and specifically within higher education.

### Raza’s Unique History of Colonization

It is important to note that Raza students’ identities are both Indigenous and European/Spanish. As such, they represent the crossroads of situated knowledge, or what Anzaldúa (1987) calls, “mental nepantlism.” *Nepantla* is an Aztec word meaning “torn between ways/worlds” and is often used by Chicana theorists to describe the Chicana reality

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<sup>2</sup> We use the notation “(e)HSI” to encompass both HSIs and emerging HSIs

of “being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition. Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 100). Anzaldúa (1987) writes that as a result of this reality *la mestiza* undergoes an inner war and struggle of borders within. Institutional leaders at (e)HSIs seeking to incorporate decolonized leadership practices must recognize and accept that the identities of Raza students are unique, “messy,” and intersectional in nature, crossing multiple borders across history, time, and space.

Raza students’ unique history of conquest, colonization, enslavement, and subjugation is a result of Spanish conquest and U.S. imperialism (van Dijk, 2009). Colonial education established in “New Spain” in the 16th century, which included parts of modern day Mexico, California, Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico, solidified a racial classification system that valued “whiteness” and subjugated Indigenous and dark-skinned people to lower levels (MacDonald, 2004; Menchaca, 2008). Colonial schools were intended to preserve Spanish culture and Catholic principles while stripping Indigenous people of their ways of knowing (MacDonald, 2004). U.S. imperialism further solidified a unique social and educational experience for Raza, with events such as the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which led to the acquisition of Mexico’s northern territories, and the 1898 signing of the Treaty of Paris, which led to the acquisition of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines (MacDonald, 2004; Ochoa, 2016). With each historical event, colonization and institutional racism became ingrained in the lives of Raza, with coloniality of power and white supremacy reigning supreme in the modern United States, and continuing to affect the social and educational experiences of these colonized/racialized people (van Dijk, 2009).

Colonization has played out through state and federal policies, which continually strip Raza of their language, culture, and educational rights,

leading to inequities in educational outcomes for these groups (San Miguel, 2008). Examples include the historical reality of segregated K-12 schools, with court rulings such as *Wysinger v. Crookshank* in 1890 and *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 solidifying a “separate but equal” doctrine and having long-term effects on the schooling environment and outcomes for Native, Black, and Raza students (Ochoa, 2016). Other anti-Raza policies include California’s Proposition 63 (1986) and Proposition 187 (1994), which sought to eliminate bilingual education in the state (primarily targeting Raza English Language Learners) (Quezada, 2016) and Arizona’s House Bill 2281, which allowed the state superintendent of public education to withhold funding to districts that offered ethnocentric courses that the bill claimed promoted resentment toward a race or the overthrowing of the federal government (primarily targeting Mexican American Studies) (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014). Texas’ school funding models have also been found to promote inequitable allocations for operations, maintenance, and facilities in majority Mexican-American school districts (directly targeting Raza students) (Alemán Jr., 2007).

### **Coloniality of Power & Knowledge Production**

Quijano (2000) complicated our understanding of colonization by proposing the concept of the “coloniality of power” which maintains that the political and economic spheres of colonialism are linked to racial hierarchy and power, and ultimately to knowledge production and dissemination. The coloniality of power explains how racial classification in the Americas was used to control labor and develop a new global power around capitalist-wage labor relations (Quijano, 2000). Power relations that developed during colonization of the Americas shaped the development of racial and economic epistemic structures of power that are evinced and (re)inscribed in numerous institutions. The development of this new world economy includes commodification of education that is linked to defining and reinforcing identities

that become configured around domination, hierarchically arranged societies, and colonial expansion for the exploitation of labor. As a result, division of labor and the idea of race are structurally linked and mutually reinforcing.

The modernity/coloniality research project, which includes scholars such as Walter D. Mignolo (Mignolo, 2010, 2011), Arturo Escobar (Escobar, 2011), Santiago Castro-Gomez (Castro-Gómez, 1996; 2000), and others, have extended the concept of the coloniality of power (political and economic) to the “coloniality of knowledge.” They remind us that we always speak from a particular location in power structures (Collins, 1990), therefore our knowledges are always situated. The modernity/coloniality research project uses Quijano’s concept of coloniality of power because of its ability to open up “the reconstruction and the restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledges and languages performed by the Totality depicted under the names of modernity and rationality” (Mignolo, 2010, p. 305).

Despite the remnants of colonialism, decolonization is a historical process that disrupts the order of the world (Fanon, 1963), and is about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life (Tuck & Yang, 2012). It has sought to end colonial oppression that marks human life, land, and natural resources as commodities to be exploited. Learning and teaching in Indigenous communities represent the alternative reality to colonial processes (Memmi, 1991; Bruyneel, 2007; Bryd, 2011) and, as a result, alternative epistemologies toward the relationship of humans to land, labor, environment, and law (Lauderdale & Natividad, 2010; Lauderdale, 2011) that are seldom represented nor taught in education, but still learned in Indigenous communities (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2005). Although the history of decolonization theory is outside education, education scholars have begun to use it within research, recognizing postsecondary institutions as systematically grounded in colonialism (Patel, 2016).

### **Education as a Colonial Project**

Prakash and Esteva (2008) outlined how education has been central to the colonizing enterprise throughout the world to create a homogenous understanding of social organizing practices built around authority and leadership. According to the authors, this has been counterproductive for Indigenous populations because the centers of power that communities ascribe and aspire to are always aligned with the centers of “civilization” and the “civilizing” projects of colonialism (Prakash & Esteva, 2008). Even though education is touted as social mobility and freedom, for Indigenous peoples, the politics of knowledge production and dissemination are intimately tied with modern western ordering of the world. As such, education has created “cultures of silence” for those with Indigenous roots. (Prakash & Esteva, 2008).

As a result of their unique experience with settler colonialism, educational systems have created a global epidemic of educated Raza individuals who lack a basic understanding of their communities and identities because educational systems have required them to abandon their own forms of cultural initiation (Illich, 1971, 1978; Prakash & Esteva, 2008). Policies have stripped them of their languages and promoted monolingualism, with multilingualism being viewed as a hindrance rather than asset (Baron, 1990; Crawford, 1992, 2000; Menken, 2008). As a result, Raza students have been forced to abandon their native tongue to succeed in the monolingual culture of education in the United States. “Cultures of silence” also pertain to Raza students living in rural communities that leave their homes for schooling, leaving their communities struggling with rural depopulation (Hondo, Gardiner, & Sapien, 2008). It also relates to Indigenous ways of knowing that are still thriving in Raza communities and families, yet are devalued as “traditional superstition” as opposed to “true science” discovered only through education (Villanueva, 2013).

## Institutions of Higher Education as Colonial Projects

The U.S. system of higher education, by nature, is a racial/colonial project (Wilder, 2013). Some of the colonial colleges, which have become world-renowned prestigious universities in modern times, were funded by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, exploited slave and Indigenous labor, and developed special schools for “civilizing” and “Christianizing” Indigenous people (Wilder, 2013; Wright, 1991). U.S. institutions also launched programs to solidify U.S. imperialism and domination in Puerto Rico and Cuba in the early 20th century, while postsecondary institutions actively denied dark-skinned Raza, further perpetuating segregation at the postsecondary level (MacDonald, 2004). As such, institutions of higher education solidified coloniality of power and white supremacy, and we continue to see the vestiges of this racial/colonial project as evidenced by inequitable access to and graduation from postsecondary education for racially minoritized students (Dache-Gerbino, 2017).

The U.S. system of higher education as a racial/colonial project is also understood when examining how colleges and universities conflict with cultural practices, traditions of learning and teaching, and ways of knowing found in Indigenous communities (de los Ríos, 2013). These communities remind us that education and educational institutions are of modern western origin and have been used as tools for acculturation and “Americanization” (Arenas, Reyes, & Wyman, 2009; de los Ríos, 2013). Even at HSIs, there is evidence of colonialism in modern curricular structures, with only 2.1% of the curriculum at “incidental” mainland HSIs having an ethnocentric focus (i.e., focused on the experiences of one ethnic group) (Cole, 2011). As noted by Cole (2011), it may not be coincidental that many of these HSIs are located in colonized

territories of the U.S. Southwest, with postsecondary institutions actively participating in the process of acculturation through curricular structures. Moreover, ethnocentric curriculum is often found on the margins in ethnic studies programs, rather than woven throughout the general education curriculum for all to experience (Aguirre, 2005)

## Transformative Leadership

With an understanding that Raza are a uniquely colonized group, and that institutions of higher education continue to reinforce coloniality of power, even at (e)HSIs, we call on leaders at (e) HSIs to transform the organizational structures that continue to oppress Raza, with the goal of liberation and justice. First we discuss the evolution of leadership theories and briefly talk about transformative leadership practices, which we used as a foundation for the proposed decolonizing leadership practices within (e)HSIs.

Leadership has undergone significant theoretical changes and advancements in the last two centuries. The great man theory of the mid-1800s focused on leaders as heroes and was rooted in individualistic culture of leadership (Carlyle, 1841). Trait theory, introduced in the early to mid 20th century, claimed leaders were born with innate traits (Allport, 1950), whereas behavioral theory, introduced in the 1950s, shifted the focus from internal traits to external behavior of leaders (Katz, Maccoby, Gurin, & Floor, 1951). The latter half of the 20th century saw the introduction of new theories on leadership that accounted for contextual variables (e.g., Fiedler, 1971). Servant leadership emphasized leaders to serve their followers (Greenleaf, 1970), whereas transformational leadership theory emphasized transforming, rather than transactional, the moral dimension of leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1998). The most recent system leadership theory relies on collective responsibility as the foundation for understanding collaborative efforts in solving problems (Heifetz, 1994; Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015).

Arguably, leadership models, despite their progression, have primarily been grounded in colonial ways of knowing and being with little effort to understand how minoritized people engage in leadership and/or how leadership practices affect colonized groups; however, several transformative frameworks lend themselves to values grounded in decolonized leadership practices. Transformative leadership incorporates Critical Race Theory (CRT) to unearth ways inequality and inequity are deeply embedded in social structures and institutions (Shields, 2016). It uses a social justice approach and calls on leaders to be intentional “in identifying and countering issues related to marginalization, subjugation, discrimination, oppression, and racism” with the overall goal of dismantling systemic forms of oppression (Nevarez, Wood, Penrose, 2013). Rather than viewing diversity as a deficit, leaders using a transformative approach view diversity as “value-added,” which, according to Nevarez et al. (2013), can advance equitable outcomes in postsecondary institutions. Transformative leadership is relevant to decolonizing practices because it calls on leaders to become aware of issues of inequality and inequity and the ways they are reinforced by educational institutions (Shields, 2010).

Similarly, through their work with minoritized educational leaders across the P-20 pipeline, Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) proposed the Applied Critical Leadership (ACL) model, which incorporates transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and CRT. They defined ACL as “a strengths-based model of leadership practice where educational leaders consider the social context of their educational communities and empower individual members of these communities based on the educational leaders’ identities (i.e., subjectivity, biases, assumptions, race, class, gender, and traditions) as perceived through a CRT lens” (p. 5). This model not only asks educational leaders to recognize the racial, cultural, and ethnic ways of knowing of students, but to also understand who they are, as leaders and people, as racialized,

cultural, and ethnic beings. This self-reflexive model is key for decolonizing practices as it helps leaders rethink their relationships to systems of power. In seeking to validate and expand the model through empirical research, Santamaría and Santamaría (2016) found that applied critical leaders were willing to engage in critical conversations about systems of oppression, apply a critical lens (if not critical race lens) to their work, make decisions through consensus building, honor all members of their constituencies, lead by example, give back to marginalized communities, build trust with members of dominant groups, and with the expression of service and transformation (i.e., grounded in servant leadership and transformative leadership ideologies).

It is important to understand how transformative leadership theory and the ACL model are connected to the decolonizing leadership practices and processes we propose. Colonization is a multidimensional process that includes legal, cultural, economic and other forms of domination of populations (Chabal, 2012). The ideological control of a population often seeks to negate the reality, existence, and legitimacy of colonized people and their ways of knowing. Decolonization acknowledges manifestations of colonial legacy with the purpose of dismantling hierarchies that have been established through colonial enterprises (MacFarlane & Schabus, 2017). This includes dismantling ideological biases and hierarchies that manifest in education and educational settings. Decolonizing theory therefore calls on educators to rethink their relation to knowledge production and dissemination. Likewise, transformative leadership theory and the ACL model call on leaders to rethink their relation to issues of inequality and inequity and recognize the ways their own racial, cultural, and ethnic ways of knowing are biased. Decolonizing leadership practices for leaders at (e)HSIs extend transformative leadership and the ACL model as praxis by calling on these leaders to recognize how they are participants in the exercise and consolidation of new forms of power that may

lead to increased suppression of Raza cultures, religions, traditions, ways of knowing, natural resources, and languages.

This is significant, because higher education is often positioned as the absolute and universal authority for knowledge production and dissemination. This assertion often elides the awareness of alternative history, language, worldviews, realities, or localities that are capable of producing knowledge that gets relegated to 'particularities' and 'peculiarities' in society. Therefore, we challenge leaders at (e)HSIs to incorporate decolonizing practices and processes in order to engage in a deeper analysis of the normative pronouncements about the legitimacy of higher education institutions as the epitome of all knowledge production and dissemination. Theoretically grounded and empirically tested, transformative leadership theory and the ACL model are nearest to decolonized leadership practices; therefore, we draw on their foundations as we suggest processes to be used in (e)HSIs.

### **Decolonized Leadership Practices & Processes**

Garcia (2018a) proposed a framework for organizing HSIs, grounded in decolonial theory, which recognizes Raza people's complicated history in connection to coloniality of power and white supremacy, both of which have impeded their economical, legal, social, and educational progress. This transformative organizational model included nine elements, first and foremost grounded in redefining the mission and purpose of HSIs as decolonized spaces (Garcia, 2018a). Once an institution commits to a mission grounded in anti-oppressive, anti-racist, decolonizing ideologies, and strives to produce both normative (i.e. graduation rates) and non-normative (critical consciousness) outcomes and a culturally enhancing environment, it must redefine its membership and organizational structures, including its technology (i.e., curricular and co-curricular practices), governance, community standards, accountability, incentive structures, and external boundary management (Garcia, 2018a).

Although the organizational model did not include "leadership" as a core dimension, this article connects leadership to governance, as governance is essentially about the authority and decision-making practices within the institution. Governance in higher education has long been talked about and written about, ranging from the macrolevel, system-wide governance (i.e., local, state, and federal policies and regulations), to the mesolevel, organizational governance, and at the microlevel, departmental governance (Austin & Jones, 2016); here we focus on the meso- and microlevels, calling on department chairs, deans, directors, vice presidents/chancellors, provosts, presidents/chancellors, and governing boards to rethink the way they lead institutions that enroll a critical mass of Raza students. Within a decolonized model of organizing HSIs and through a lens of decolonizing leadership practices, the core governance question is, "Who has the authority and decision-making power to promote and enact a decolonial educational model grounded in equity, justice, and liberation for all?" This includes all those in positions of authority who can create a liberatory and culturally relevant environment, promote curriculum shifts that link social theory to identity development and community impact, and produce cultural icons in imagery and representation for recruitment (Natividad, 2015).

Here we discuss specific processes and practices for leading through a decolonized lens and lay out specific dimensions of the organization that leaders using a decolonized lens must address. Importantly, decolonizing leadership practices at (e) HSIs presupposes that leaders at (e)HSIs do not have to be Raza. This is essential since leaders as (e)HSIs continue to be predominantly white (Contreras, 2018; Garcia, 2019; Gonzales, 2015; Santos & Acevedo-Gil, 2013). Although Garcia (2018a) calls on HSIs to specifically recruit organizational members committed to the mission and purpose of a decolonized institution, we recognize that changing the compositional nature of the organization takes time. The call to use decolonized

leadership practices, therefore, suggests that if the goal is liberation and justice for all, both the oppressed and the oppressor must work together to disrupt the coloniality of power that dictates how leaders manage and organize institutions of higher education (Freire, 1970).

### **Process #1: Understanding Own Identity in Relation to Coloniality of Power**

Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) found that leaders from minoritized groups draw extensively on the positive attributes of their identities, including racial, cultural, and gender identities when leading for cultural relevance. We recognize that this is an important process for minoritized leaders within (e)HSIs, but members of all groups must take time to understand their identities in relation to larger systems of oppression. As individuals are called on to lead an organization that is working towards equity and justice for minoritized communities, they must first come to know who they are and understand their own racial privilege within a larger social system. This process must be intentional and will likely evoke feelings of denial, anger, shame, guilt, dissonance and resistance (Linder, 2015; Robbins & Jones, 2016). Becoming an antiracist ally committed to decolonial mentality is developmental and long-term (Broido, 2000; Edwards, 2006), suggesting that leaders in (e)HSIs must invest time and patience when learning about their own identities as connected to coloniality of power.

### **Process #2: Accessing Decolonization Theory**

There is evidence that leaders from minoritized backgrounds regularly draw on critical theories when engaging in leadership practices (Santamaría, 2014; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2016). Yet little evidence suggests that members of dominant groups lead in such ways. All leaders at (e)HSIs must ground their leadership practices in critical theory, and specifically decolonial theory. Decolonization, however, must not be considered a metaphor, where metaphor “invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility

of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). In drawing on decolonial theory to develop leadership practices at (e)HSIs, we encourage leaders to learn about settler colonialism and all its form, analyze its effects on Raza/Indigenous people, reposition the work of Raza/Indigenous thinkers as central to the operations of the institution, and take steps to redistribute the land, water, and Earth to Raza/Indigenous people (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This is a complicated request, yet in learning about decolonization as a theory and grounding all practices in this process, we suggest that leaders at (e)HSIs rethink their connection to the land and original peoples. This may include a historical look at the founding of the institution, which for some, particularly those that were founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially those founded as land grant institutions, may have a direct connection to settler colonialism worth considering (Patel, 2016). In addition to grounding practices in decolonial theory, leaders must also draw on critical race theory, as it forces leaders to recognize race and racism, as well as the intersectionality of social identities, while striving to center minoritized voices within decision-making (Santamaría, 2014).

### **Process #3: Engaging in Critical Conversations about Colonialism**

In conjunction with coming to understand their own identities as connected to coloniality of power, and accessing critical theories for leading, leaders at (e)HSIs must engage in difficult, yet critical, conversations about the larger systems that are hindering student progress and success. Harper (2012) reminds us that educational researchers rarely name racism (or other systems of oppression) when seeking to make sense of inequities in student outcomes. This inevitably leads to race-neutral conversations in practice, in which institutional leaders, similarly, name anything but racism as the problem they see in their institutions (Bensimon, 2012). Leaders at (e)HSIs must reframe



their conversations, asking themselves how their policies and practices are excluding Raza and other racialized students (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015). Conversations must be anti-deficit in nature, with the focus on “analyzing how practices might be failing Raza students. Leaders, from the president to department chairs, must model for others how to reframe unequal outcomes as a problem of practice rather than a problem of student deficiencies” (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015, p. 9). Moreover, critical conversations must include definitions of complicated ideas such as settler colonialism, institutional racism, structural racism, equity, and justice (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

#### **Process #4: Recognizing Inequities in Outcomes and Experiences**

Santamaría, Jeffries, and Santamaría (2016) suggest that as leaders move towards a plan of action for culturally relevant leadership, they must first recognize inequities. This is essential in (e) HSI, where inequities in academic outcomes and experiences for minoritized people are still present (e.g., Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2016). One approach for learning about inequities is to disaggregate data by race and other social identities (Bensimon, 2012). Leaders must also access and utilize indicators of equity, which include proportional representations of each group’s outcomes and experiences (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015). While disaggregating data will help leaders see inequities, it is essential that they seek to be race-conscious and equity-minded practitioners who take responsibility for inequities, rather than placing the onus on students (Bensimon, 2012). As leaders learn about inequities, there are numerous outcomes and experiences they must consider when seeking to adequately serve Raza students, including graduation rates, course completion rates, transfer rates, job attainment rates, post-baccalaureate enrollment, academic self-concept, civic engagement, experiences with discrimination, and critical consciousness

development (e.g., Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Cuellar & Johnson-Ahorlu, 2016; Garcia, 2018a; Garcia & Cuellar, 2018).

#### **Process #5: Building Consensus in Decision-making**

Garcia (2018a) argued for a community-based, decentralized approach to authority and decision-making, influenced by an Indigenous approach to organizing and leading. Leadership within Indigenous communities looks different than it does in settler communities, often grounded in collaborative decision-making practices between educational systems and the communities from which students come from (Bird, Lee, & López, 2013). Moreover, leadership is connected to service and contributions to the community, with the ultimate goal of strength and self-determination for these communities (Bird et al., 2013). As enrollment driven, broad access institutions, (e)HSIs are often situated within Raza communities, meaning that they reflect the population of surrounding communities (Garcia, 2016). As such, leaders of (e) HSI that enact decolonial leadership practices must be committed to collaborative decision-making, not only within the institution, but also with the local Raza communities. This may come more naturally for leaders from minoritized backgrounds, with evidence that they prefer consensus building when leading (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012), yet leaders from dominant groups must also be committed to rethinking their approach to leadership. As a result of building consensus in decision-making processes within communities, (e)HSI leaders must also be prepared to rethink their own definitions of success, advancement, and development, as a community definition may differ from their own.

#### **Process: #6: Taking Action to Disrupt, Address, and Repair Inequities**

It is one thing to recognize and name inequities in outcomes and experiences for Raza and minoritized students, taking action to interrupt the inequities will take specific leadership practices that lead to changed behavior (Santamaría et al., 2016).

Bensimon (2012) reminds us that taking action will take time, as educational leaders and practitioners have been trained to connect student outcomes with student behaviors, rather than behaviors of the organization. Malcom-Piqueux and Bensimon (2015) suggest that leaders at (e)HSIs adopt specific metrics of equity, apply them to disaggregated data, engage in performance benchmarking activities, and model practices of equity-minded data interpretation. Moreover, taking action will require goal-setting exercises, data monitoring, and ongoing reflection and action (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015). Leaders at (e)HSIs must become institutional agents who not only recognize the unique capital and knowledge that minoritized students bring with them to campus, but also recognize the larger systems that are preventing these students from succeeding while working to dismantle those systems (Garcia & Ramirez, 2018).

We argue that leaders at (e)HSIs who adopt these processes will ultimately enact practices that will lead to greater outcomes for Raza students. Rather than developing specific programs and practices that have been empirically shown to work for serving Raza, we suggest that leaders focus first and foremost on deconstructing their own leadership processes. In leading through a lens that is conscious of colonialism and white supremacy, adopting critical theories for leading, disaggregating data to reveal inequities, and engaging in consensus-building decision-making and action, leaders at (e)HSIs will be best suited for addressing inequities that plague Raza students as a result of their unique history of colonization and oppression.

### Conclusion

HSIs, despite their federal designation and/or enrollment of Raza students, must be understood as racial/colonial projects. In proposing decolonizing leadership practices, we recognize that, like education, leadership has been completely grounded in western ideation and understandings of the nature of followers and their relationship to leaders. Grounded in decolonization, leadership practices within higher education must be reframed, which requires an interrogation of the premise of leadership. It also challenges the idea that leadership is only "legitimate" if it fits within a western framework and values dominant non-Indigenous culture. The idea that there are leaders and followers is a colonial model; to decolonize the concept of leadership there must be a mitigation of power and a reconsideration of how power operates and flows. As Foucault (1984) reminds us, the idea that power is wielded by individuals by way of sovereign acts of domination or control is false. Instead, power is dispersed and flows throughout society (Foucault, 1984). This is not to say that we should do away with western notions of leadership. Instead, it is to remind us that Raza students are Indigenous and carry with them the history and legacy of colonialism, and that their Indigenous roots, identity, understandings, and ways of being have been taken from them. Yet, remnants of this identity persist and survive within the students in other ways. We call on leaders at (e)HSIs to help them understand their colonial past and their Indigenous culture as a way of healing, developing critical consciousness, and moving toward civic engagement and social action.

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