

# Latínx Studies Journal



A Journal of Chicanx & Latínx

Experience and Thought

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*Latínx Studies Journal:*

## **A Journal of Chicanx & Latinx Experience and Thought**

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*Latinx Studies Journal*, previously known as *Concientización*, is a student academic journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chicanx and Latinx experience and thought. We are committed to creating alliances across boundaries of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. Submissions include essays, poems, and artwork related to Chicanxs/Latinxs in the United States. *Latinx Studies Journal* also gives students the opportunity to participate in the publication process as authors and editors.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE TO READER

This volume of the *Latinx Studies Journal* will give the readers greater depth into contemporary Chicanx and Latinx issues ranging from immigration reform, health care access, gender equality, educational disparities, food and music. All of these topics intertwine to give us a more complete image of what daily life in the United States is like.

Our exploration begins with a global perspective. In **SECTION ONE: INTERACTING**, the writers will focus our attention to how the United States interacts with other countries and the countries' citizens. This will be a discussion on immigration, the undocumented experience, and political and economic involvement of the United States in other countries. In **SECTION TWO: LIVING**, there will be an in-depth discussion on various aspects of daily life. Writers will explain some of the institutionalized issues that affect our families in our clinics, schools, and even restaurants. **SECTION THREE: EXPRESSING** provides reflections. This section is a space for expressing ourselves through poetry, fashion design, music, and various art interpretations.

All three sections serve two purposes. First, to develop a deeper perception of the world around us. Only through awareness of the barriers that surround us will we be able to bring about change. Second, every piece in this volume is intended to serve as documentation of our experiences. Let every essay and every poem serve as proof of our passion for our culture and our efforts.



## SECTION ONE: INTERACTING

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*"My great strength is knowing who I am and where I come from -my island."*

- Oscar de la Renta, Dominican-born fashion designer





# **The Systemic and Cultural Barriers Faced by Latinx Immigrants in the United States**

Gabi Mjaanes

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The aim of my research project was to obtain a better understanding of the barriers that Latinx immigrants face during their immigration journey and experience. In order to narrow down the subject matter, I chose to examine systemic and cultural barriers experienced by Latinx immigrants, specifically those from Central America. Throughout the project, I hoped to gain a better understanding of these barriers and compare the relevant literature on immigration issues to the experiences of an immigration attorney who has dealt firsthand with both sides of this question: systemic barriers via work done in the legal system and representation of clients, and cultural barriers via work with clients and understandings of their experiences.

## **Literature Review of the History of Legislation in the US Immigration System**

In order to discuss the systemic and cultural barriers found in the contemporary immigration law system, specifically faced by members of the Latinx community, it is first essential to understand how the United States' immigration system has been transformed from a historical perspective. According to historians such as Miranda Tienda and Susana Sanchez, current migration patterns to and from the US “have deep historical roots that are related both to changes in US immigration policy and to unequal and inconsistent enforcement of laws on the books” (Sanchez and Tienda, 2013). The first acts related to immigration were the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 which authorized the President to deport any foreigner that presented a danger to the United States. In 1848, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States acquired around “two-fifths of [Mexican] territory to the United states, including not only Texas, but also present-day California, Nevada, and Utah, and parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming” (Ewing, 2012). In so doing, the residents who had been previously living in Mexico were now living in the United States. While not explicitly migration, this territorial change is linked to future migration. Around this time, with the growing notion of westward expansion, new settlers began populating the West of the country and high levels of immigration from Europe also began coming in due to “the economic, social, and political turmoil engendered throughout Europe by industrialization” (Ewing, 2012). After the Civil War ended, immigrants from China and southeastern Europe also began arriving in large numbers.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was when “immigration first became a special subject for diplomatic negotiation” (Daniels, 2019) as it was the beginning of a history of restrictive American immigration policy. Notably, the Chinese Exclusion Act was structured primarily on the concept of race, a theme that would repeat itself later on with future immigration policy, as seen, for example, with the Immigration Act of 1917 and exclusion of nations in the Asia-Pacific triangle. The exclusion of Chinese workers made many employers turn to Mexicans as a source of cheap labor which led to greater “anti-Mexican sentiment and hysteria regarding Mexicans as a presumed threat to national security” (Hiemstra, 2019). The Immigration Act of 1924 established a quota system designated to restrict migration from Southern and Eastern Europe (Sanchez and Tienda, 2013), with racially-based logic, but excluded countries in Central and South America based on the idea that good relations should be kept with the American neighbor in the Western Hemisphere (Diamond, 2020). This is a crucial action to consider as these countries provided major sources of cheap labor, a theme that is very much still present today. The 1965 Amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 dismantled the racist quota system and favored the groups that had previously been excluded via the 1924 Act. Specifically, the 1965 Act favored family reunification regarding labor qualifications and the exemption of family members of US citizens from the ceilings placed on the visas afforded to specific countries. While intended to curtail the migration of Latin Americans, the family reunification aspect directly favored groups such as Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans who already had been in the country due to labor programs such as the Bracero program and the Bootstrap program, respectively, which allowed their family members to come as well. In 1966, amidst the Cold War, Cuban exiles began coming to the US and the Cuban Adjustment Act was passed to allow them to apply for residence for a year, later giving them a more advantaged position over other South and Central American immigrants in the states. The 1986 Immigration Control and Reform Act demonstrated a shift in immigration policy, strengthening ideas of enforcement, followed by the 1996 Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act which intensified the tightening of the border and expanded criteria for deportation (Sanchez and Tienda, 2013). Such a shift in mentality was exacerbated after September 11 and has taken an unprecedented shift in subsequent administrations.

After a brief examination of the history of immigration in the United States, I investigated how such legislation contributed to changes in migration and whether a pattern

could be found among these changes. As mentioned previously in the discussion of history, one of the first instances of Latinx presence in United States was under the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 through which an estimated 100,000 former Mexican citizens came to be within US borders as the United States grew to include the territory that was previously Northern Mexico (Gutierrez, 2016). While not explicitly migration, the shift of borders led to a shift in nationalities and can be linked to future patterns of Latinx migration to the United States. This notion of migration without choice has been observed throughout US and Latin American history, with US intervention in various Latin American countries, particularly Mexico, leading to displacement and subsequent migration to the United States. Moreover, the view of Mexican labor as disposable, cheap, and available throughout history led to increased migration via the establishment of legitimate and illegitimate guest worker and labor programs, such as the Bracero Program and, more recently, H2-A. Much of the literature emphasized how the increased intensity of enforcement laws and limitations of opportunities for legal entry directly lead to an increase in unauthorized migration (Sanchez, 2013; Massey, 2012).

Furthermore, with the introduction of NAFTA and attempts to curtail migration, the displacement of people in Mexico was followed by tremendous increases in the undocumented Mexican population in the US despite “greater repression not [reducing] the likelihood of undocumented migration” (Fernandez, 2007). The “Age of Migration” (Castles and Miller, 2008) in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has been characterized by greater transnational bonds, an increase in indigenous populations travelling north, and an unprecedented rise in deportations (Rodriguez, 2009). These trends are intertwined with the ways in which the immigration system has been structurally evolving and, therefore, are crucial in developing an understanding of how immigration between Latinos has become a shared cultural experience over time.

Despite numerous polls showing that most Americans are more tolerant of and appreciative towards immigrants, immigration policy has been a central point of debate, particularly about members of the Latinx community, in current and past administrations (The Atlantic, 2018). During the Obama administration, the former President gained the nickname “Deporter-in-Chief” due to the record deportation of approximately 3 million noncitizens while also creating the DACA program (Lopez and Skrentny, 2013). Despite the significance of DACA, Obama’s prioritization of detaining and removing immigrants at the border – particularly

women and children fleeing violence in Central America – set a precedent for the continuation of harsh immigration policy under the Trump administration (Hing, 2018). As for Central American asylum seekers, “the Trump administration has made far-reaching changes to asylum procedures to discourage migrants from entering the US along the southwest border.” These changes to both asylum and removal procedures contributed to issues including a growing backlog of cases in immigration courts (Gramlich, 2020). The consequences of the combined policy and the increase in apprehension and violence towards Latinx immigrants, particularly those from Central America, is vital in understanding the challenges which immigration lawyers and their clients are facing.

### **Literature Review of Systemic Barriers in the US Immigration System**

Recognizing the systemic barriers present in the United States’ immigration system is critical to understanding how and why there has been an increase in undocumented migration to the United States and how the system plays a role in the perpetuation of Latinx subjugation. Systemic barriers are policies or procedures which, when implemented, lead certain people to experience exclusion or disparity in opportunities. As mentioned previously, there have been specific immigration policies implemented which targeted Latin American immigrants and restricted their ability to come into the United States legally. While some were explicit in their targeting of Latin American Immigrants, such as the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965 which set quotas for the number of immigrants coming from Latin American countries, others have been more implicit. For example, recent laws in Arizona, California, and Texas have permitted racial profiling by law enforcement or associated Latinxs with “illegal” immigrants. These laws have, among other things, denied undocumented immigrants public services, increased border patrol agents in gateway states, and increased the criminal parties related to immigration (Vargas et al., 2017). Thus, despite not explicitly discriminating against those from Latin American countries, such laws end up targeting and being used against Latinx immigrants, particularly those that are undocumented, because the geographical locations in which they are implemented also have high Latinx populations.

Another primary way in which the system has barriers that target Latinx immigrants is in regards to the disparity between policies that are implemented and the written laws due to reasons such as competing policies, resource availability and the judgement of state agents

(Czaika and de Haas, 2013). In their work, Czaika and Haas offer an example of a country that, despite tight immigration restrictions, accepts “unwanted” immigrants if they can contribute to “low-skilled services.” Czaika and de Haas focus on how effective immigration policies have been historically and claim that while existing policies target migration flows, they fail to address other non-migration policies and factors such as the labor market to be truly effective. Additionally, the removal of resources such as the ability to administratively close cases and the increased backlog in the immigration system lead to cases being tended too inefficiently, arguably preventing those in legal trouble from getting fair representation and due process (Laird, 2019). Consequently, other policies that have to do with immigration such as those surrounding immigration raids, ICE, and Border Patrol may serve as practices that reinforce the subjugated states of working-class Latinx citizens and immigrants in the US which humiliate and embarrass those being targeted via inhumane and morally questionable practices (Romero, 2006).

Awareness of the systemic barriers in the United States’ immigration system is essential in order to better grasp how its intricacies, along with other social barriers, impact the way that Latinx immigrants encounter cultural obstacles. One of the primary ways in which systemic barriers and cultural barriers intersect is with the dangers and difficulties of undocumented border crossing, as a result of unequal US immigration policy towards Latinx countries. In other words, the unequal immigration policies, practices or procedures that Latinx people are subject to result in their unequal access or being excluded from immigrating to the US, forcing them to immigrate other ways such as undocumented immigration. The trauma involved in such crossings leads to greater risk for depression among Latinxs who are new immigrants (Coffman, 2010). Trends in mental illness are also seen in the children of undocumented Latino immigrants, especially with their educational experience. Various studies demonstrated that pressures of acculturation, language usage, and cultural transition were associated with lower grades and behavior issues (Vega, 1995; Santiago, 2014). The studies that regarded the children of immigrants overwhelmingly demonstrated how US-born children of immigrants, when compared to children who were immigrants themselves, faced greater difficulties surrounding issues of acculturation, educational success, and mental health (Orozco, 1995).

In regard to the parents of immigrant children, many of the studies also exhibit the ways in which Latinx immigrant parents shifted their parenting strategies to adjust to a new cultural

environment. Values such as empathy, seeking support, development of bicultural skills, and better communication were embraced by Latinx parents who tried to “provide their children with more positive cultural images” in order to protect them from prejudicial attitudes (Perreira, 2006). Other studies found that higher levels of parental monitoring were linked to children obtaining higher grades (Santiago, 2014). Such findings demonstrate the ways in which Latinx immigrant parents attempt to navigate stresses in their own lives while simultaneously attempting to educate and bring their children up with values that allow them to prosper in a country that targets them “as threats to national security and the cause of criminal activity” (Vazquez, 2010). These statistics apply to both documented and undocumented Latinx immigrants, illustrating a more general barrier that is present towards the Latinx immigrant population regardless of status. One can hypothesize such differences are not solely linked to cultural differences, but also to an increasingly xenophobic, nativist, and anti-immigrant American culture that tends to not discriminate between undocumented and documented Latinx immigrants.

## **Methods**

Following this examination of the literature on systemic barriers that affect Latinx immigrants, I was curious as to how these findings matched up with the experiences of someone who may deal with them daily. For this reason, I chose to interview a lawyer who specializes in immigration law and who primarily works with clients from Central and South America. I wanted to have a more local approach to the subject of Latinx immigration and since she is a local attorney in Madison, with no other locations around the country, I thought she would be a great resource to bring this subject to a more local– and personal– scale. The questions I asked focused on her experience with a changing rhetoric around immigration, the innate barriers of the legal system, patterns in immigration and immigration law, as well as some of the cultural and personal barriers her clients face such as transnational connections and mental health. The interview was recorded with the interviewee’s consent and the questions asked were formulated based on an analysis of the reviewed literature. The goal of the interview was to attempt to understand the immigration system through the lens of someone who deals with systemic issues on behalf of the client. While it is vital to understand the immigrant experience from the perspective of those moving from one country to another, the attorney’s perspective is a unique

one which accentuates an unusual, yet crucial, union between the legal system and the immigrant. I was interested in the attorney's experience under the Trump and Obama administrations due to their stark differences in immigration policy.

### **Transcript of the interview**

In her own words, here is how the attorney described how she got into the profession she is now in:

I've been an attorney for roughly three years now. I had a career change. I used to do basic biological research at the UW, as well as, other research institutions. I then shifted careers as I got interested in the law. I wanted to change careers to a field that had a more direct and immediate impact on people's lives, instead of doing research that can take an untold number of years before it affects a real person. I went to law school thinking I would likely focus on criminal defense. In law school, however, I was exposed to various areas of law and I got really interested in immigration law.

The attorney is more focused on the humanitarian aspect of immigration law which involves mostly removal defense - where people face deportation proceedings – and asylum seekers. However, she says that while this is the bulk of what she does, it “isn't necessarily a reflection of what is going on in the larger community as much as a reflection of who is walking in through your doors and asking for your assistance.”

After this brief introduction, I started by asking about some of the realities of practicing immigration law under the Trump current administration. In particular, I was motivated by how her experience might differ from some of the literature due to the difference in timing – her experiences being more recent and, therefore maybe even more relevant, than the findings in some of the literature such as the works of Vega, Romero, and Guendelman. Despite her career in private practice beginning at the start of the Trump administration, she worked at a legal clinic during her schooling. Thus, she was able to observe laws and practices change from one administration to the next. She explained how many practices and ways to navigate the system under Obama are no longer able to occur under Trump due to the unprecedented rate at which laws and procedures are being changed.



For example, she discusses how certain procedures that used to be commonplace are being strictly curtailed or interpretations of the law are being tightened to make it hard for immigrants to qualify for relief. In particular, the process of administrative (admin) closure used to be a common practice for certain types of cases. Administrative closure was a practice where a case was not closed, but it was not active, and the immigrant did not have court hearing. The attorney describes it to her clients as “the court putting the case on a shelf” and the case can be taken off the shelf when necessary. She explains that this procedure was important because it allowed many immigrants to complete a step in the process to get lawful permanent resident status (i.e. a green card) from within the U.S. Without administrative closure, certain immigrants would have to complete this step while waiting outside the U.S. This could mean a year or more that the individual is separated from their family, their job, and their community in the U.S. This creates a huge hurdle for the individuals trying to get a green card and it creates a huge hardship for families.

The attorney’s analysis corresponds with an article from the ABA Journal that discussed the Castro-Tum case (the case where Jeff Sessions restricted the use of administrative closure) and the article states that Sessions’ decision “took away a well-established tool for managing the already overwhelmed immigration court dockets” (Laird, 2019). By the same token, that same article went on to claim how organizations such as the NAIJ have become “concerned that the Trump administration has moved from reprioritizing cases to deliberately trying to affect case outcomes.” This sentiment is echoed, albeit indirectly, by the attorney as she concluded her answer to my question by claiming, “now [administrative closure] is no longer an option in these and that makes things so much worse.” It must be noted that there is little evidence that Sessions’ decision was made with the intent of harming the cases of Latinx immigrants specifically. However, data from Pew Research Center demonstrates that Latinx immigrants are significantly less likely to become naturalized citizens than other groups such as Africans or Middle Easterners (Barrera, 2017). Already disadvantaged, decisions such as that of revoking administrative closure present another challenge for Latinx immigrants to achieve legal status in the United States.

In preparing this article, the attorney informed me that there have been developments on this issue. Thus far, the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit has struck down Castro-Tum. While this decision is only binding on the area of the U.S. that the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit has jurisdiction over, the decision is persuasive

to court's outside the jurisdiction of the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit. She is hopeful that the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit, the federal circuit with jurisdiction over the portion of the U.S. where she practices, will issue a similar decision in the future. The attorney has seen at least one Immigration Judge in the court where she practices administratively close a case based on this 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit decision. This highlights the ever-changing nature of immigration law under this administration and the difficulty for immigrants and attorneys to navigate the system.

The frustration that I perceived throughout the interview, as seen in that previous quote, was palpable and reflected my own personal feelings listening to her accounts. This sentiment was again seen as I asked about how successful the attempts of seeking asylum were for her and her firm:

Those are very, very challenging. If you come from those three countries [Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador] it is very challenging to get asylum. Most people are fleeing very serious violence. [...] For example, for one client, three people in his family had been murdered. But we couldn't tie the murders together in such a way that clearly showed the family was being targeted and that the case fit neatly into one of the categories to qualify for asylum.

In order to be granted asylum, one must carry the label "refugee" which entails being "forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group" (UNHCR, 1951). In the United States, asylum can be applied for either in an affirmative or defensive process but, in both cases, the asylee must prove that they fit the definition of asylum (National Immigration Forum, 2019). However, because one must demonstrate that they have a "well-founded fear of persecution" on account of one of these protected classes (race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group), it can be difficult to prove that someone truly qualifies for asylum. She explains that often individuals have a fear of violence or they have suffered from physical violence, but it can't be shown that they are specific targets of the violent actors, or that they are targets on account of a protected class. As violence in Central America, particularly, has escalated so has the number of immigrants seeking asylum in the US. According to a report done by the

Migration Policy Institute, “the high rates of violence in the Northern Triangle have resulted in significant increases in asylum applications from citizens of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras”. In particular, factors such as poverty, economic collapse, crime, and environmental degradation all have contributed to increases in emigration from countries in Central America (Restrepo, Sutton, and Martinez, 2019). However, the claims for asylum are usually requested for violence and armed conflict that is experienced, especially by women and children (Rosenblum and Ball, 2016). An article that I found from Law Journal Library entitled “Obtaining Political Asylum: Classifying Rape as a Well-Founded Fear of Persecution on Account of Political Opinion” by Maureen Mulligan discussed the difficulties that victims of rape, in particular, have in qualifying for asylum in the United States under the “well-founded fear of persecution on account of political opinion” clause of the definition. The articles’ introduction used the stories of two Salvadoran women who were both raped and tortured in the early 1980s in El Salvador by members of guerillas. While from a different time frame, the attorney reflected a similar frustration with this vagueness as seen in the article about victims of domestic violence:

And again, with Jeff Sessions, he has attempted to prevent domestic violence victims from obtaining asylum. ... There is a “catch all” kind of protected class – particular social group – in asylum law. There had been a lot of work and advocacy to get victims of domestic violence from certain countries recognized as a viable particular social group and thus eligible for asylum. These populations don’t have protection from their governments, they don’t have resources, and they’re being specifically targeted. But this progress in asylum law has been rolled back due to this administration. So difficult cases have become even more difficult to win.

Thus, the notion of repeated trends with migration and the struggles embedded in the system are not new concepts. With this in mind, I also asked the attorney questions about some of the cultural barriers her clients faced and about the resources that were available to them via the law firm.

I see lots of clients who have trauma in their background. I usually nudge them to go for counseling because we need it for their court case. Often clients are more willing to do so since they know it'll benefit their case and give them the best chance at winning. It is also an opportunity to get people into counseling and get them the support they need. There is a great nonprofit called UNIDOS that provides free counseling and works with our Spanish-speaking population. It is a wonderful resource that helps a lot of our families. Families that are struggling to get legal support would not be able to access such mental health services if they had to pay for them.

Her response demonstrates how mental health can play a role in the ways that clients deal with their immigration experiences and their experiences once in the country. Throughout my research, I had found literature that said that undocumented immigrants from Latin America go through a greater amount of trauma than their documented counterparts due to the nature of their journey and constant fears of being exposed for lacking documents (Perreira and Ornelas, 2013). I wanted to know how this played out in the cases the attorney worked with, especially when setting up the case and the ways in which such issues might prevent barriers to the case's success. Her response is as follows:

For example, in preparing for trial in the most recent case we did, we had to do a lot of prep in getting the client ready to testify and getting her affidavit and her story fully flushed out. So, you see [trauma] in a number of ways, in the way it affects people's memory and their ability to tell a story in a narrative fashion since trauma can cloud over everything. It is very stressful for clients to talk through and relive these painful events in their lives. It is an unfortunate part of the process, but you must make sure you're giving an accurate representation of their story to the court. The written version of the client's story must be correct, and the client must also be prepared to answer questions and talk about it in a matter that makes sense in court. So that can be really challenging and stressful on the client.

Again, as in previous responses, her attitude corresponded well with the literature, in this case, with Perreira, Ornelas, and other researchers whom they referenced. For example, Perreira and

Ornelas noted that “poverty prior to migration together with entry to the US without authorization were strongly associated with the likelihood of exposures to trauma in both adolescent children and their parents” which is relevant both in the attorney’s interrogation process, but also in the added financial stress that legal aid can cause. Importantly, her narrative also added a more personal and impactful perspective on such circumstances which demonstrate how this trauma can not only be consequential to a client’s health, but also to their legal success.

### **Analysis of the Interview**

Throughout my meeting with the attorney, I learned a great deal about the intricacies of the immigration law system in the United States, particularly in regards to the hurdles that lawyers and their clients need to jump through in order to simply have the ability to build a case. In particular, the attorney emphasized how cases that to outsiders may seem like obvious wins are usually not enough for judges which further demonstrates the difficulties of navigating today’s legal system coupled with a growing nativist rhetoric. I found these details to be surprising, although in retrospect they shouldn’t have been as I was aware of the difficulties of providing a strong case for situations of asylum, for example. Nonetheless, the extent to which these cases, according to the attorney’s responses and experiences, were difficult to win was astounding given my personal, if very basic, knowledge on the circumstances in the countries from which many were fleeing and attempting to seek asylum claims in the US. For example, she discussed how she had a client whose family was targeted and threatened with murder but because there was no hard-concrete evidence of such threats, the judge classified the instance as generalized violence: “I just recently had a case that we knew was borderline, but we were hopeful because we had a more favorable judge. Even though we felt that we were showing a systematic targeting and a laundry list of murders, it just got dismissed as generalized violence.” Thus, these barriers, that are largely in existence due to the *definition* of asylum and its vagueness, are preventing people from being safe from murder and abuse and exacerbating these struggles by placing them in a legal system that doesn’t take such claims seriously.

Another interesting thing that I learned was that in the majority of the attorney’s cases the bulk of the people seeking her help were those claiming asylum or those who are in removal situations. Yet, of those clients, she said that many did not come primarily for economic opportunities. This was a surprising detail as most of the research I encountered discussed

immigration to the US from a largely economically-motivated standpoint. While I recognize that there are some limitations between the research and such findings due to the recent nature of the exacerbated violence in Central America, in particular, I was still astonished that this was a less significant motivation for migrating than family ties or fleeing violence. For example, I brought up *Transnational Villagers* by Peggy Levitt (2001) and the idea of two-way connections between sending and host communities, curious about what that looked like with her clients in the Madison area.

Usually people have ties here. You certainly have people who have come here and ended up here by happen-chance, but usually people have known someone in the area, which is why they've ended up in Wisconsin vs. California vs. wherever. There are usually family ties here and then most people do have family or ties back in their home countries, often times we have parents who maybe have recently migrated with one child but have other children back home, or perhaps a spouse. So, there are certainly ties back and forth, and for people who have children back home that is always difficult. Even if someone wins their asylum case, depending on the age and marital status of their child, they may not be able to petition for that child to join them in the U.S. or they may have to wait a very long time before that child would be eligible to join them in the U.S.

The attorney's response enforces the idea that people choose to come to Madison less due to economic opportunities and more so due to already present connections and elements of stability and safety, something that I was surprised about. Yet, it is important to note that the experiences of migrants vary and while she has dealt mainly with clients who are attempting to be granted asylum, migrant experiences vary, and this is just one aspect of a very complex legal system.

Another element that I was curious to learn about was in regard to how the attorney's clients were able to afford the services her firm provided. The literature that I encountered said that 1/3 of children of undocumented immigrants live in a state of poverty (Androff, 2011) and I wanted to understand how that figure varied based on clients in Madison and if it was, in fact, generally accurate in the clients she saw, how did they afford her services?

I mean, that probably lines up. Again, I have a small sample size but definitely people who are new to the country are struggling and are working low-wage jobs. For us, giving representation is hard. So, I am always trying to screen in the initial consultation to see who has any viable claim and who really has no chance to win their case. I don't want people wasting their money on resources that aren't going to get them anywhere. We also have a limited capacity to take on clients who aren't able to pay – there is always a balancing act. And for people in court, it depends on where they are in their process and which judge they're scheduled with in regard to how long their cases can last. For cases that have hearings that will be held in a year or a few years, clients can spread their payments out and make it work, but that isn't always the case.

Her response was truly insightful to me as, when first figuring out what questions to ask and how they would add to my work, I thought this question would be more centered around issues of loans or debts as ways to afford such services due to their expense. I was surprised to know that even in the initial counsel, she and her colleagues try to go through the case to their best of their ability to make sure that each case they attend to has some chance of succeeding in court, despite the previously mentioned difficulties in trying to do this. Such dedication shows the commitment that many attorneys in this profession have to the clients they help with, even in the face of tremendous adversity and challenges as was mentioned throughout the interview. Although, again, it must be noted that the way that the attorney runs her office is not shared among all law firms and immigration lawyers. Nonetheless, her quote to me was a true testament of the ways that the systemic barriers of the immigration system couple with cultural and humane issues.

As I have mentioned throughout the paper when reflecting upon the responses, the majority correlated with the literature I found and reviewed. While she mentioned a few barriers and instances that I had not found in the literature, due to lack of knowledge or chance, I believe that for the most part the information that I received corresponded with my findings via the literature. In particular, her experiences matched up with most of my findings regarding the difficulties in the immigration system and the way that those challenges have been exacerbated under the current administration, making the legal process more difficult to navigate for lawyers and clients alike. Despite some bias in regards to sample size and type of clients she works with, I believe that the attorney's experience also captivated some of the cultural barriers that her

clients endure and demonstrate the ways in which Latinx immigrants, in particular, face both systemic and cultural hurdles via their immigration to the United States.

The intended aim of my research was to focus on both the systemic and cultural barriers Latinx immigrants faced when living in the United States. By selecting an interviewee who worked in the legal profession, rather than someone who had a more holistic approach on the immigration experience, I implemented bias in the study as the interviewee would most likely be more familiar with the systemic barriers than the cultural barriers given the nature of their work. This was seen in my interview as her knowledge and responses on questions surrounding innate barriers to the immigration system were much more knowledgeable and abundant than those surrounding some of the cultural barriers. Furthermore, as the cases she worked on were more concentrated on the areas of removal defense and asylum, rather than those of employment or family immigration, she was more familiar with cultural barriers in those regards (mental health and trauma) than others (parenting). For this reason, I think that her insight in her areas of expertise as well as her experiences generally corresponded with the literature in those areas, but where her professional knowledge waned, so did the parallel between her experiences and the literature – at least on a greater scale. Nonetheless, I think that her responses were very meaningful and provided an added element to the impact of my findings as they provided personal credibility to many of the literature findings.

Overall, my interview made my understanding of the literature much more profound as it was via her explanations and responses that I was able to see my findings echoed in her experiences. Not only does this attest to the validity of the literature used in my study (and therefore why understanding and being familiar with such work is crucial to developing accurate understandings of this area) but also to the fact that the attorney's responses brought the findings to life, connecting them with real stories of real people, essentially humanizing the data. This humanization is crucial and, I would argue, increasingly more so now when the subjugation of Latinx people is possible due to their dehumanization and objectification in the media. Thus, the combination of the literature reviewed in this study and the interview together demonstrate the many struggles that Latinx immigrants face throughout their journey to, and time in, the United States. My hope is that in gaining a better understanding of such struggles, we can become more aware of the work that is needed to be done to challenge such obstacles and thus, fight for the improvement of quality of life for Latinx immigrants and people in the United States.



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## **The United States' Intrigue with the Dominican Republic and Free Trade**

Erika Esparza

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The United States has been pervasively involved with political and humanitarian affairs in the Dominican Republic for a long time. Excessive involvement in Latin American countries is not anything new for the United States, however, their entanglement in the Dominican Republic, a country with a population of close to eleven million is particularly interesting due to the extensive efforts for such a small country. The economic factors and urge to prevent foreign influence in the Dominican Republic are key causes for the consequent efforts to maintain a close relationship with the Dominican Republic. Ultimately, securing U.S interests such as financial benefits and political power lies behind the motives for the U.S to involve itself in the Dominican Republic.

U.S involvement led to the Dominican population in the country today because of the push factors that U.S presence caused. Chapter 7 in *Harvest of Empire* "Dominicans: From Duarte to the George Washington Bridge" explains the severe circumstances that were occurring in the Dominican Republic during the mid-twentieth century and how the U.S was complicit. The Dominican Republic suffered intensely under the notorious dictator Rafael Trujillo who ruled for thirty-one years. Up until Kennedy, the U.S government had backed him despite the atrocities that were being committed under his power. In 1961 President John F. Kennedy and the CIA put an end to his deadly regime and had him assassinated (Gonzalez 119). After his death, Bosch was democratically elected. Bosch was a progressive leader who focused on the redistribution of land to help those who previously had little or none. He was exiled seven months later due to his attempts at land reform and progressive agenda. Bosch's goal to move the country forward would involve interfering with sugar growers and the U.S, something that the U.S would not tolerate, especially at a time where there were fears about the spread of communism due to the Cold War. This was incredibly significant because it unmasked the true intentions of the U.S, a country who so often fights for democracy was undoing one because it did not align with their agenda.

Military involvement through sending troops to the Dominican Republic proved to be one way in which the U.S exerted control over power relations on the island. In 1965 there was an uprising to restore power to Juan Bosch, the country's first democratically elected president. Thousands ran to confront soldiers on Duarte Bridge who overthrew Bosch. In response, the U.S

sent 26,000 troops to invade and put Joaquín Balaguer, one of Trujillo's aides, in power by 1966 (Gonzales 118). To put into perspective the magnitude of this invasion, there were more troops deployed to this country in the Caribbean than there were in Vietnam at the time. Right-wing political repression caused for violent attacks on Bosch supporters, resulting in over three thousand deaths, and thousands of imprisonments and tortures within a decade (Gonzalez 118). This forced a shift in power is once again crucial in understanding the true agenda of the U.S with the Dominican Republic. Installing or maintaining a democracy was not the goal since a democratically elected president was overthrown as soon as his plans proved to not favor U.S monopolies and the wealthy sugar plantation owners. All this violence forced Dominicans to flee and led to the Dominican exodus, a refugee flight. Although the U.S did not consider them refugees until the 1980s, Dominicans were political and economic refugees because of the United States' meddling in their country. By the 1990s over 300,000 Dominicans had settled in New York, becoming the second largest Hispanic group in northeast.

Economic relations that benefit the U.S financial interests such as free trade zones and foreign production are another key factor in maintaining proximity with the Dominican Republic. Chapter 13 in *Harvest of Empire* "Free Trade: The Final Conquest of Latin America" explains the Caribbean Basin Initiative created under the Reagan administration. This program gave direct federal aid to Caribbean countries that established free trade zones and eliminated tariffs for goods going to the U.S. An expansion of foreign production and U.S factories closing in the U.S to move to the Caribbean followed. This established even closer ties between the U.S and the Dominican Republic. The U.S federal government had spent \$700,000 since 1980 to promote Caribbean maquiladoras. This spending caused some controversy which in turn caused Congress to make new restrictions on economic aid under the CBI (Gonzalez 251). Despite these jobs being created in the Dominican Republic, the great Dominican exodus happened during that same decade of the 1980s. Poverty in the Dominican Republic remained a major issue and push factor for migration. Although the program was claimed to be an initiative for the improvement of labor and trade relations between the U.S and Caribbean countries, the underlying purpose was to serve as a prevention for outside forces to come into the region and establish relations.

The U. S's principal motivation for the involvements has been for the protection of its economic interests. There are three main interventions where the U.S sent the marines to the Dominican Republic within sixty years: in 1905, in 1916, and in 1965. "The United States and

the Dominican Republic to 1965: Background to Intervention” written by Abraham F. Lowenthal, supports this idea in their recounting of events of U.S intervention (Lowenthal 31). The 1916 intervention demonstrates a prime example of U.S intervention being utilized to protect U.S interests such as the consulate and military forts. After the assassination of President Caceres in 1911 the country suffered from instability, causing it to fall into a pattern of civil wars, financial strains, and presidential turnovers. This instability created another opportunity for intervention. The U.S decided to assist by appointing an American financial advisor and overlooking presidential elections. In this way the U.S was able to ensure that no one who could potentially be a threat to their economic interests would reach power. In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson sent the Marines to protect the U.S Consulate, Embassy and take over Fort San Gerardino. While there, U.S. officials decided to establish a military government in the Dominican Republic and for the following eight years the American military ruled the Dominican Republic.

The involvement in the Dominican Republic has served largely to ensure security for the U.S. economic interests to keep foreign powers outside of the Caribbean. By maintaining close ties during unstable periods and in the election processes, the result is more likely to be in the United States’ favor. By utilizing military force to protect their presence in the country the U.S has made it clear that it can and will involve itself in the island’s affairs whenever it pleases. This political arrogance reflects the sense of entitlement that the U.S has towards most countries. Securing its own interests at the expense of the lives and well-being of those in the other country is justifiable in the eyes of the U.S.

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## **Exploring DACA: Can this short-term program have a long-term impact?**

Isabel King

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### **Literature Review**

When research began on this essay, it was the winter of 2019 and the fate of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program hung in the balance. The case of DACA was set to be presented to the US Supreme Court in November of 2019 and it was unclear what the outcome would be. Many would-be DACA recipients wondered if they would see the benefits of the Obama-era program and those who had already disclosed their immigration status in the application process feared what might happen next. Originally, the intent of this project was to evaluate the efficacy of the 2012 DACA program that President Trump terminated with an executive order in 2018. After hearing the case, the Supreme Court ruled in June of 2020 that the program was ended unlawfully. Subsequent statements and decisions seem to corroborate the ruling, meaning DACA is likely here to stay. While this exploration of DACA now possesses a more forward-looking lens, it is nonetheless worthwhile to take a close look at the benefits and shortcomings of the program during its first five years.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program is tricky to study because of the uncertainties that continue to surround it two years after its cancellation in 2018. Introduced by President Barack Obama in June of 2012, the program ran as it was set up until the Trump Administration cancelled it in 2018. Litigation continues and, according to the National Immigration Law Center, DACA recipients who currently have or previously had DACA can continue to submit applications to renew their status. DACA was the Executive Branch's answer to over a decade of activism from the DREAMER movement, and it offered no comprehensive or permanent solution regarding the status of undocumented children living in the United States (Swerts, 2018). Such a solution might have come from the original DREAM act, first brought to congress in 2001, which would have offered a pathway to citizenship and legal status for undocumented children (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014). DACA has received praise and criticism from both sides of the aisle. The following literature review addresses its pros and cons and considers its long-term effects and effectiveness, but the reality of the DACA program is that its tumultuous history since the inauguration of President Trump has made it difficult to accurately do so.



The Obama administration established DACA by executive order on June 15, 2012 (Fiflis, 2013), extending temporary work authorization to young undocumented applicants between the ages of 14 and 31 that meet a substantive list of requirements. On a renewable basis, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program temporarily allows its beneficiaries to live and work in the United States, it does not grant legal status or citizenship. Many of the established requirements were based on an individual's status in relation to the date the program began, June 15, 2012. From this date, applicants need to have continuously resided in the US to present time and have been physically present in the US, and have no lawful status (Fiflis, 2013). Applicants must also meet the following: came to the U.S. before their sixteenth birthday; been in the US at the time of making their request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS; are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States; and have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety (Fiflis, 2013). With a long litany of questions, burdensome documentation requirements, and a \$465 fee, applying for DACA was no small undertaking. Success opened the door to still more applications: Social Security numbers, driver's licenses, bank accounts, and other bureaucratic necessities denied to the undocumented (Gonzales et al., 2014). Still, a Brookings study found that initial application rates were high. By June of the following year, close to half a million people had applied (Singer & Svajlenka, 2016). This is a large portion of the population eligible to apply for the program. Unsurprisingly, Immigrants to the United States from Mexico and other parts of Latin America participated in the program in great numbers. As of 2016, 75% of the applicants were born in Mexico (Singer & Svajlenka, 2016). A substantial number of applicants were born in such countries as El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. These statistics explain how DACA has come to be so heavily associated with Mexican American politics. It is hard to know for sure how many immigrants are living in the US without documentation, and questions of age and schooling requirements make it difficult to estimate the size of the applicant pool. One estimate is that as of 2016, there were up to 1,932,000 people potentially eligible for DACA. (Hipsman, Gómez-Aguíñaga, & Capps, 2016).

## **Benefits of DACA**

The reason for this high rate of participation is clear: undocumented life in the United States is hard, and DACA offered concrete benefits. For young people, lack of documentation typically implies professional stagnation and restricted upward mobility. A 2016 study on the effects of DACA found that lack of legal status correlates to depressed labor market outcomes in an individual (Pope). Without documentation, individuals may struggle to find jobs and enroll in college. Simply put, there are definite limits to what one can achieve without documentation. Enrollment in school, income, and obtaining a GED had been on the decline for undocumented youth in the years leading up to the establishment of DACA (Pope, 2016). A separate study on undocumented youth found that undocumented status taxes individuals' mental health and well-being (Siemons, Raymond-Flesh, Auerswald, & Brindis, 2016). Adolescence is already a tumultuous time in regard to self-esteem and mental health, and the added pressure of lacking documentation can make things worse. Immigration status can affect individuals' sense of self, levels of social support, and societal integration (Siemons et al., 2016). This can manifest as feelings of isolation, shame over being undocumented, fear of being discovered and deported, anxiety about one's future, and, at its worst, depression and suicidal thoughts. For the millions of young people struggling every day due to their lack of documentation, the DACA program thus represented a glimmer of hope. At the four-year mark, about half of the eligible population, over 728,000 people, was able to take advantage of the program (Hipsman et al., 2016).

Though it did not permanently alter immigration status, DACA did offer great psychological, social, and economic relief to its recipients. With work authorization came a valid social security number, state ID, or driver's license. Siemons's previously mentioned mental health study discovered that DACA had an overall effect of smoothing integration into society (2016). Recipients were able to expand their support networks, lose some of their shame, and increase their comfort and self-confidence (Siemons et al., 2016). This study highlights the psychological burden that undocumented status places on adolescents, and how much they are able to open up and live without that burden. DACA recipients also experienced economic benefits and educational gains. A 2016 study by the Migration Policy Institute, drawing on data from the Census Bureau and surveys of undocumented immigrants, found that in regards to education, about three quarters of respondents found it easier to attend school and stay in school with DACA (Hipsman et al., 2016). A separate empirical study reported higher levels of GED

attainment amongst DACA recipients compared to their non-DACA counterparts (Pope, 2016). Education levels, success in the workforce, and upward mobility are all tightly linked in the US and Western society. Recipients who received GEDs also increased their earning potential (Pope, 2016). Hipsman et al. found that in a short period of time, DACA has helped young unauthorized immigrants better integrate into the U.S. economy and labor force (2016). Furthermore, recipients earned on average twenty percent more than their non-DACA counterparts did, were more likely to have credit cards, and had increased access to licensed occupations (Hipsman et al., 2016). Clearly, DACA had tangible benefits for many young, unauthorized immigrants across the United States.

### **Challenges and Flaws**

As we acknowledge the good DACA has done for thousands, it is important to acknowledge the program's flaws. It was by no means a perfect or permanent solution to the problems of the U.S.'s undocumented youth, even on its own terms. Not everyone was eligible and not everyone eligible applied. Immigration incorporation varies according to the financial, human, and social capital of immigrants, and therefore DACA may have had the unintended consequence of exposing an inequality among undocumented youth in the US (Gonzales et al., 2014). As an example of this, as mentioned earlier in this paper, the application fee was \$465 which, for some families just scraping by, is not affordable. The implementation of DACA also created a new category referred to as UnDACAmented, people who found themselves doubly disadvantaged because they did not receive the benefit (Gonzales et. al, 2014). For those who did, there was always uncertainty about the future. DACA required the disclosure of status coupled with only two guaranteed years of work authorization, which was scary for many potential applicants. Additionally, while DACA provided mental health benefits, there were also some downsides on the well-being of recipients. Because DACA recipients had better job opportunities and earning potential, they often assumed more of the financial burden for their families. This increased strain and responsibility had serious effects on some adolescents (Siemons et al., 2016). It is hard to evaluate how strongly these limitations weighed against the positives of DACA, but it is necessary to acknowledge them.

In researching this topic, a few difficulties arose. The program was first introduced in 2012 and most of the research on the topic was published between 2014 and 2016. President

Donald Trump announced the end of the program in 2017, and it officially ended in 2018. DACA has been all over the news in the time since its cancellation. Numerous lawsuits have been filed against the current administration claiming the program was terminated unlawfully and there have been three nationwide injunctions. The Supreme Court's decision, released on June 18, 2020, stated that the program was ended unlawfully. Among other reasons, the court maintained the legality of the program, referred to the decision to rescind it as "arbitrary and capricious" as well as identified the benefits provided to recipients, including Social Security and Medicare, as interests the court often feels called upon to protect (United States Supreme Court, 2020). Ultimately, this ruling is seen as a victory by the program's supporters.

DACA has certainly become a mainstay in national news coverage, but little published literature addressing the events after 2018 exists. It could possibly be too soon to tell or to have done research and gone through the publication process. Most of the research cited here was done on a short-term basis so a few of the studies hinted, in their conclusions, at a desire to see how DACA benefits and the lives of recipients played out in the future. With the recent legal developments, a more in depth or longitudinal study is now possible. One of the early critiques of the program itself was how fragile it was because it was created by executive order and could be easily cancelled (Fiflis, 2013). Despite the recent victory, the events from 2017 on have shown how prophetic this warning was.

When rescinded in 2017, alterations were made to how DACA was to function. The previous DACA status holders who are still permitted to renew and those who fight to keep the program alive represented the remnants of DACA, new applicants were barred (Duke, 2017). In the wake of its official cancellation, the American people and the program's benefactors were left wondering what now? Even today, the structure of the program is still fundamentally a fragile one and this question begs to be asked. Through researching the topic, a few additional questions arose regarding the legacy of DACA. There are arguments surrounding its effectiveness, what kind of lasting effect it will or will not have, how to move forward in respect to the recent rulings, and more. The study done by Gonzales, Terriquez, and Ruszczyk was intentionally short term and explicitly states a desire to see how the program unfolds in the future as the program matured in order to form more conclusive and certain opinions on its impact (Gonzales et al., 2014). Though we must still study the impact of its cancellation, the program now can mature and evolve. What direction or shape it may take is not yet clear.

In order to make sense of some of the open-ended questions surrounding DACA and to get some insight on the various perspectives on the program, I conducted an interview with a practicing attorney in Madison, Wisconsin. The interviewee also works with an immigration clinic, serving those facing deportation proceedings. The choice to interview this person specifically stemmed from an interest in services such as immigration clinics. The Gonzales study found that undocumented youth were more likely to apply for DACA status if they had access to community organizations for immigrants or application help (2014). The clinic is such an organization.

### **Interview Digest**

To begin the interview, we spoke about some of the logistics of the immigration clinic. The clinic opened in 2012, the same year that the DACA program began, but the clinic currently focuses on cases involving those facing removal who have suffered family separation. The interviewee mentions throughout the conversation that she pays close attention to immigration policy in the news and changes being made from both personal interest and for the sake of her job and the clients she serves. She is knowledgeable about DACA and has worked with DACA recipients in the past.

Research on DACA suggested that certain people were better positioned to take advantage of the program's benefits than others. My interviewee agrees.

“ (...) the more educated you are the more access to legal counsel you have, the more informed you are about the process, the more likely you are to take advantage of it. Our DACA clients are super successful humans. They've figured it out, they're determined, many of them do it on their own. I think if you don't have access to an education beyond high school or parents who speak English, then you are less likely to take advantage of it. Also, many people were scared and for good reasons which we can all see now.”

Whatever their relative advantages, my interviewee notes that all DACA recipients and applicants experienced fear, uncertainty, and misgivings.

“I think every single person that has applied for DACA wonders whether they should have.” Applicants for DACA were already vulnerable and limited in their ability to establish roots here in the United States and progress upwards, she notes. Disclosure of status puts immigrants in an even more vulnerable position. “They’re in limbo. It’s creating a position where we have a lot of clients, who started with us in 2012 in their young life, now we look at them 7 years later and they might have two kids, they might have bought a house, they could be in their fifth year of their career at a bank and that could all be taken away from them incredibly quickly. They could be put in removal proceedings possibly with no eligibility to stay in the United States. It seems incredibly abusive to a population that contributes so much to our country.” This rhetoric of abuse and inhumanity repeats throughout the conversation. In her professional opinion, when it comes to immigration, especially in asylum cases, immigrants deserve and have a right to much more than they are getting. Her compassion for her clients is always clear. Though the lawyers involved with the clinic do everything in their power to help these people in removal proceedings, there are limits to what they can do. Some of her hope stems from the pilot program her clinic is a part of that provides universal representation for all residents of Dane County in impeachment proceedings. The clinic receives funding to represent these people and has also made a commitment to represent anyone who had DACA that might face removal proceedings, whether they can afford it or not. She also mentions that Madison, Wisconsin is a safe city, which in general means that immigrants have a better support system from the city and the city council than in cities and states with a more restrictive view on immigration.

When DACA began in 2012 and the clinic spoke with clients about their fear surrounding the disclosure of their immigration status, they would imagine a worst case.

“At the time, we would say, ‘you know, if Mitt Romney gets elected, he’s not gonna deport people for DACA. Worst case he has your information and probably is just going to cancel the program.’ That was the worst case we saw. I don’t think

anyone was prepared for the vitriol of the current administration, especially in regard to Dreamers.”

The state of our country’s policy towards immigration under the Trump administration is beyond what the interviewee could have even imagined as a worst case. “It’s going to be really hard to walk back how much the current administration has been able to accomplish at the border,” she notes. “We have people living in squalor on the other side of the border hoping to seek asylum in the United States, and we’ve just banned it all. How successful this administration has been in the last 8 months barring asylum is truly unbelievable.” On some level, current events have generated shock and grief. Still, those in the interviewee’s position feel they must carry on and continue their work.

### **Interview Analysis**

My interviewee’s breadth of knowledge, passion, and accessibility exceeded my expectations. Their responses to my questions helped to fill in some gaps in the academic literature, provide some insight on the arguments that surround the DACA program, and color the knowledge I acquired on DACA with concrete stories about experiences that speak to how DACA affects real lives. At the time of the interview, the Supreme Court had not yet ruled against the cancellation. Given her position, the interviewee came across as more passionate, informed and accessible than I had even hoped for.

It appeared to me that one of the biggest gaps in the research on DACA arose from its brief time frame: its creation, implementation, and cancellation were all relatively recent. In the six years of the program pre-cancellation, there was not sufficient time to do a long form, in depth study on long term effects. Following my research, I was left with a lot of “what now?” type of questions. Though she, too, has these questions, the interviewee was able to provide some information about the current state of the program and what seems to be coming in the next few months. Democrats tried to fight the cancellation of DACA by the administration, and that battle has been held up in courts. As mentioned earlier, it is the interviewee’s opinion that the decision to cancel DACA will be upheld by the Supreme Court, officially ending the program and its benefits. Unfortunately, the interview was conducted months before the Supreme Court decision was made. In hindsight, I can only presume the effect the decision would have on my

interviewee's responses as well as attitude. No one new had been able to apply for DACA since its end was announced and those who did apply had been living in limbo.

In the policy world, DACA's six-year timeframe feels short. In the life of a young person, however, six years is a lot. The interviewee notes that some of her clients that came to the clinic in the early years of adulthood now have fully established roots in the States with a career, a home, and a family. As García notes in *Legal Passing*, establishing roots makes leaving the US feel like less and less of an option for immigrants (García, 2019). For the Dreamers, the United States is home. I cannot begin to imagine the anxiety and fear these people have surrounding their inability to control the situation and knowing their entire lives could be uprooted.

In the interview, many of the concepts from *Legal Passing* kept coming up (García, 2019). Our conversation echoes García's point that, dependent on locality, undocumented immigrants do their best to live normal lives and most do not hide in the shadows. Prior to the interview, as a resident of Madison, a student of political science, and someone keenly interested in immigration, I did not know that Madison is what is known as a SAFE city. SAFE is an acronym that stands for Safety and Fairness for Everyone and is a network of 11 cities across the United States (Schorr, 2018). This means that local immigration policies are sympathetic to immigrants and the city provides funding to secure representation for those seeking asylum or facing removal proceedings (Schorr, 2018). A 2016 study found that only between 2007 and 2013, only thirty seven percent of immigrants had legal representation in all deportation cases (Eagly & Shafer). The goal of establishing a SAFE city is that living in Madison would ensure that immigrants will have legal counsel should they need. This reinforces the importance of place that García's text identifies (2018). Life undocumented would certainly be easier in a safe city as compared to a city that is actively attempting to identify and remove undocumented immigrants.

The interview is consistent with the information on the relationship between mental health, well-being, and immigration status. The language used when speaking about the immigrant experience is severe; words like "abuse," "emergency," and "vitriol" occur regularly. The attorney I interviewed is an intelligent professional who appears to choose her words carefully and speaks from a position of great knowledge on the subject. Therefore, I feel comfortable in saying she does not use these words lightly. People's families are being torn apart and people are dying in immigration facilities. In the interviewee's opinion, the United States is dealing with an emergency situation in regard to immigration enforcement. This is not something



that came across in the research because the scholars and researchers had no way of predicting what has progressed in the past few years of the current administration.

The interview addresses issues that the research could not account for. For example, when DACA was first introduced, it was critiqued for not going far enough (Gonzales et al., 2014). For those sympathetic to the plight of immigrants, it is a common belief that the Dreamers deserve a comprehensive path to citizenship. If DACA was a step forward, the current administration appears to be two steps back. It is hard to say what the next administration will bring. In selecting this topic and researching DACA, I wondered about the amount of real, positive change the program could have on the lives of recipients. The question has since shifted. Now, I am left wondering about the impact of its cancellation and subsequent reinstatement on the lives of recipients. Was the program in effect for long enough to drastically improve people's lives? What happened to those in limbo for the past two years? Do its recipients regret submitting their applications and disclosing their undocumented status to the government? Though not as satisfying as a concrete answer, when it comes to DACA, there is a level of uncertainty that the American public is forced to accept. DACA won a substantial victory with the June 2020 Supreme Court decision. However, as the American people have now learned the hard way, the program is subject to the whim of the current administration. Only time will tell what will happen to the program and those who put themselves in an extremely vulnerable position by revealing their lack of documentation. Siemons et al. proved that being undocumented takes a toll on an individual's mental health that can be lessened with DACA status (2016). One can assume that the combination of going from undocumented and afraid, to the relief of possessing DACA status, back to a state of anxiety and fear about lack of documentation would weigh heavily on the mental state and well-being of an individual.

One quote that stuck with me following the interview was the following: "I think every single person that has applied for DACA wonders whether they should have." This is the sad reality of the aftermath of DACA. The termination of the program during the administration of a man who, in the interviewee's words, "won the election on a 'build that wall' chant" is some of the applicants' biggest fears realized. This professional works in her every day with people who feel the very real consequences of our government's policy decisions. This gives the lawyers at the clinic a unique perspective. It is one thing to theorize how a policy will affect the US in respect to its people, its safety, or its economy. It is another thing to see it.

Going into the interview, I had no intention of discussing politics or either of our political leanings. In the list of questions I came prepared with, none mentioned politics, President Trump, or the 2020 election. However, the conversation seemed to take a natural turn in that direction, and we ended up having a sustained conversation about politics in which both of our political leanings became clear. The Trump administration is staunchly anti-immigration in a way that is not characteristic of most right-leaning individuals or elected officials. The interviewee believes if Mitt Romney had won the election in 2012, the shift away from DACA likely would not have been nearly as severe. Her thinking about immigration policy begins with the insight that immigrants are real people who deserve to be treated as such. It is her opinion that the current administration includes several racist actors that motivate their immigration policy decisions. The Republicans tend to be more conservative and restrictive on immigration and the Democrats tend to be more lenient on immigration (Pew Research, 2018). However, Pew Research found that there has been a decrease among both parties in the percentage of people who think legal immigration should be decreased (2018). This research paired with the insight gained from the interview implies that the current administration is a unique, extreme example of anti-immigrant sentiment. Immigration and political leaning are clearly tightly connected. Following the interview, I was left looking towards the 2020 election and wondering whether the country will elect a new president and what will happen in the following four years in regard to immigration. In November, Vice President Joe Biden won the presidential election, defeating incumbent President Donald Trump. In January of 2021, President-elect Biden took office and has the opportunity to show immigrants and DACA recipients how he will address the issue of immigration.

## **Conclusion**

Though not all questions that arose surrounding DACA and its effectiveness can be answered, the literature review coupled with my conversation with a professional in the field have created a picture of the impact the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program has had on this country and undocumented individuals, in particular. Though it has been through substantial ups and downs, DACA was able to provide real relief for its recipients who reached higher GED attainment, were hired for well-paying jobs, had the ability to attend college, and experienced an overall increase in their mental health and wellbeing. There is a lot of uncertainty

regarding the future of Dreamers, but for the short duration of the program, it helped a lot of people.

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## SECTION TWO: LIVING

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*"There are uses to adversity, and they don't reveal themselves until tested. Whether it's serious illness, financial hardship, or the simple constraint of parents who speak limited English, difficulty can tap unexpected strengths."*

- Sonia Sotomayor, Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States



## **The Underutilization of Health Care in the Mexican American Community**

Emily Izenman

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The term Mexican American is viewed as an alternative to Latino or Chicano and is seen as a subgroup of the Hispanic population (i.e. a general term referring to all persons whose ethnic background is from a Latin American country). Mexican Americans are those whose families emigrated from Mexico or are descended from Mexican citizens who remained in what is now the U.S. Southwest after 1848 (Tellez). According to the 2017 U.S. census bureau, there are a total of 58.8 million Hispanics living in the U.S., representing 18.1% of the total population. Among Hispanic subgroups, Mexican Americans were the largest at 62.3%. Within the Mexican American population, only 19.3% had health insurance coverage (Office of Minority Health, 2019).

Analyzing the health determinants of Hispanic subgroups is extremely difficult to do without error. With ever expanding Hispanic national-origin groups and health differences among families with varied generational status, it becomes increasingly difficult to determine overarching trends in Hispanic health. What is easy to understand, though, is that Mexican Americans under-utilize the healthcare system when compared to their White, Black, and other Hispanic subgroup counterparts (Escarce, 1970). This under-utilization of the healthcare system can lead to adverse effects for the immigrant and U.S. born Mexican American. Thus, it is important to recognize the causes of this under-utilization and contribute to research that investigates ways to improve the prognosis of Mexican American healthcare experiences.

Findings from “Understanding Observed and Unobserved Health Care Access Among U.S. Latino Adults” states that Latinos of Mexican ancestry (i.e. Mexican Americans) are more likely to experience delays in healthcare (MA=89%, NML=88%), are less likely to afford healthcare (MA=83%, NML=79%), and are less likely to attend a physician's visit than non-Mexican Latinos (“NML”) (MA=75%, NML=63%). Furthermore, Mexican Americans are less likely to have health insurance and to have been spoken to in Spanish at their last health visit compared to non-Mexican Latinos. The article suggests these differences may be attributed to differences in region of residence and health insurance coverage (Bustamante, Fang, Rizzo & Ortega, 2009).

Findings from the “Hispanic Health and Nutrition Examination Survey” noted that Mexican Americans have the highest need for healthcare (based on poor perceived health status and limitations) yet report the highest incidence of barriers preventing them from receiving this



very care (Estrada et al., 1990). Results showed that Mexican Americans who experienced low educational attainment, low income, are Spanish-speaking, less acculturated, and are foreign born are at a disproportionately higher risk of under-utilizing the healthcare system compared to their non-Mexican counterparts. Sections below explore the potential barriers to obtaining healthcare and detail plausible explanations as to why Mexican Americans under-utilize the U.S. healthcare system.

Previous research on the under-utilization of healthcare for Mexican Americans has shown potential barriers to accessing healthcare such as cultural differences, financial constraints, language differences, and lack of transportation. A multivariate study explored barriers to healthcare utilization by investigating “healthcare utilization as a control in order to examine variables related to encountering barriers and being prevented by these barriers to obtain healthcare” (Estrada et al., 1990). The study aimed to document which healthcare barriers Mexican Americans experience, determine which Latino subgroups are most vulnerable to these barriers, and examine “the joint effects of predisposing, enabling, and need characteristics on the barriers of healthcare” (Estrada et al., 1990).

Researchers found that 75% of the time, barriers encountered by Mexican Americans were drastic enough to prevent them from proceeding to obtain the medical care they initially sought. The study also found that Mexican Americans with less education and lower income experienced more problems with the healthcare system than other Hispanic subgroups. Moreover, Spanish-speaking, foreign-born, and less acculturated Mexican Americans experienced the greatest number of adverse barriers to healthcare (Estrada et al., 1990). Many Mexican Americans noted that the cost of medical services was a large barrier to receiving and seeking out care. This is understandable, based on the data that Mexican Americans have the highest uninsured rate for medical expenses in the country (Estrada et al., 1990).

Another study titled “Barriers to Medical Care for Mexican Americans” noted that social characteristics can greatly influence the utilization of healthcare. Specifically, researchers state that social isolation, social participation, and social class can interfere with a responsible healthcare regimen. This study collected health data from Mexican Americans using a survey questionnaire. Respondents were asked “If you or a member of your family is sick, what reasons would prevent you from seeing a doctor?” (Chesney et al., 2019). Additionally, respondents were asked to view a list of 20 health related problems and report if their family members had ever consulted a

physician based on those perceived symptoms. Results showed that 54% of the Mexican American participants believed that lack of money and transportation would prevent them from seeing a doctor, even if they thought the visit was necessary (Chesney et al., 2019). Researchers additionally discovered that increasing the level of acculturation from low to high doubles the odds of health care utilization. In other words, the more acculturated one is, the more likely they will utilize healthcare services when they see fit (Chesney et al., 2019). Lastly, researchers found that for individuals of low social class, reducing social isolation doubles the odds of health service utilization, while for upper class individuals it has no effect (Chesney et al., 2019).

Next, a study titled “Utilization of Traditional and Non-Traditional Health Care” by Marín et al. (1983) collected a random sample of 100 low-income Mexican Americans and interviewed them about their healthcare use patterns and their perceptions of under-utilization of healthcare by people in their own community (Chesney et al., 2019). Researchers found three prominent themes for under-utilization of healthcare while conducting interviews: economic factors, cultural barriers, and systemic barriers. In terms of economic factors, researchers found that a strong correlation exists between one's income level and utilization of medical services among Mexican Americans. Survey data further indicated that cost was the main reason elderly Mexican Americans refrained from using the healthcare system (Chesney et al., 2019). Regarding cultural barriers, researchers noted that there is a difficulty with cultural explanations, namely, U.S. providers tend to blame the victim stating that if Hispanics were more similar to Anglos they would be better off in relation to the healthcare system. However, conclusions from the cultural barrier section within this research suggest that systemic barriers are more prevalent reasons for under-utilization than cultural barriers (Chesney et al., 2019).

In terms of systemic barriers to care, researchers noted that systems of care that are available for low income individuals generally discourage use of healthcare in many subtle ways. For example, since many Mexican Americans prefer speaking Spanish, it is critical that doctors on call can speak both Spanish and English fluently. Unfortunately, there is a serious shortage of bilingual healthcare providers in the U.S. (Chesney et al., 2019). Furthermore, research shows that having undocumented status is a unique barrier to the Mexican American population. This is mainly because there is no federal funding that covers healthcare for undocumented immigrants, so medical services are not readily available. Plus, since many Hispanics fear deportation, they are

unwilling to approach healthcare providers in case their undocumented status is “discovered” (Chesney et al., 2019).

A study titled “Hispanic Healthcare Disparities” by Weinick et al. (2004) offers an interesting approach toward analyzing healthcare disparities within the Hispanic population. The journal states that Hispanic Americans are often treated as a monolithic ethnic group “with a single pattern of healthcare utilization” (Weinick et al., 2004). However, the article posits we must challenge this monolithic approach because there are considerable differences between/within Hispanic subgroups that can affect physical and mental health differently. Thus, one can’t group all Hispanics into one category because each subgroup is affected by different factors such as country of origin, language, and length of time lived in the U.S.

The “Medical Expenditure Panel Survey” is a nationally representative survey that measures healthcare use and expenditures. It revealed that Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans are less likely to make emergency room visits than non-Hispanic Whites. Further, Mexican Americans are less likely to have prescription medications, and more recent immigrants are less likely to have ambulatory care than their counterparts (Weinick et al., 2004). These findings are consistent with past research and suggest that the disaggregation of data (separating a large national origin group into subgroups) is a better way of analyzing healthcare disparities, as it enables specific surveillance within subgroups.

Most research on healthcare for Hispanic populations converges on similar evidence. There are recurring themes like lack of financial stability, lack of transportation, and lack of culturally competent care that extend throughout each research study. Having compiled prolific research on the topic, it was important to investigate what is being done to eliminate healthcare disparities, and who is attempting to bring these solutions to light.

A study titled “Caring for Latino Patients” by Juckett et al. (2013) noted several ways to alter the healthcare system to ensure better health care for Hispanic communities. One way to incorporate the Hispanic population into healthcare is for healthcare facilities and their workers understand the specifics of Hispanic culture. For example, Hispanic culture has unique values that must be recognized in a clinical setting in order to comfortably treat Hispanic patients at appointments. These values are portrayed as interactions between the doctor and patient.

Healthcare providers should employ *simpatico*/kindness that emphasizes politeness and conflict avoidance; *personalismo*/friendliness which emphasizes creating a personal connection

with the healthcare provider and their family; and *respeto*/respect which suggests being respectful of an individual and their age, as older patients should be addressed as *señor* or *señora* instead of by their first names (Juckett et al., 2013). *Modestia*/modesty is a value that is often neglected by healthcare providers but is arguably the most important. Latinos may be conservative in relation to physical exposure, so it is advised to have a chaperone with the patient, or a same-sex physician available (Juckett et al., 2013).

Another example is understanding “Folk Illness.” Folk Illnesses are Latino healing traditions that are distinguished between being “hot” or “cold” illnesses (Juckett et al., 2013). Cold illnesses include cancer, indigestion, decreased libido, and headaches. Hot illnesses include anger, pregnancy, diaper rash or sore throat. Knowing the specifics of Folk Illness can be a great way for doctors to make their Latino patients more comfortable, so researchers suggest providers commit a simple list of these illnesses to memory. Further, it is imperative that healthcare providers recognize that Latino patients may have already tried alternative healing practices before their Western physicians visit. Latino culture encourages the use of alternative health practices such as herbal remedies, midwives, bonesetters, or *sobadores*/physical therapists (Juckett et al., 2013).

If a provider should ask the patient about symptoms relating to their illness, Juckett et al. (2013) suggests that healthcare providers learn a few culturally common illnesses in the Latino culture to make the visit more seamless. For example, *susto* or soul loss is a common symptom that is most closely related to post-traumatic stress or anxiety disorder. Further, *mal de ojo* or evil eye might be brought up if the patient believes their child is experiencing “inability to thrive” (Juckett et al., 2013). Most importantly, physicians should not assume that all Latinos share the same beliefs about alternative medical practices. Instead, providers should be open to hearing a range of responses when attending to Latino patients.

The study additionally offers guidelines on how to have one-on-one conversations with Latino patients to foster a candid environment. The mnemonic LEARN has been readily employed in the medical community as a tool to better relate to Latino patients. According to the model, the physician should sympathetically Listen to the problem of the patient; Explain and share both perspectives of the problem; Acknowledge and discuss any differences and similarities between the two views; Repeat his or her perception of the problem to the patient; and Negotiate a treatment plan agreement (Juckett et al., 2013). Researchers studying this mnemonic believe the

LEARN technique identifies and helps resolve any cultural differences that may arise at a healthcare appointment (Juckett, 2013).

To learn more about the under-utilization of the healthcare system by Mexican Americans, I chose to interview Dr. Lakar (pseudonym), a leader within Health Equity Strategy and Development at the American Medical Association (AMA). The AMA has the largest cohort of physicians and medical students in the U.S. who aim to “promote the art and science of medicine, and the betterment of public health” (AMA). Dr. Lakar’s role is “working to make sure the AMA is being strategic about how we partner and work internally and externally, in order to support health equity in all its forms.” I chose to interview Dr. Lakar based on her extensive knowledge of healthcare demographics in the U.S. Additionally, she is Mexican American, and has worked closely with the Mexican American community through her strategy work.

The first question I brought to her attention was, “In your opinion based on what you’ve seen, do Mexican Americans have a worse health status (for example do they suffer from specific diseases at higher rates, are they more prone to particular illnesses) compared to other Hispanic subgroups?” She explained that since Mexican Americans “are the largest portion of the Hispanic population” it is hard to know the complete picture of what they experience the most. Additionally, since most data is ‘aggregated’ (grouped together and not divided into subgroups) it makes it much harder to tell what affects them most. She stated, “when you pull the data together, we know Mexican Americans have higher rates of diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. I don’t think there is enough data to conclude they are worse off than any other Hispanic group. But, we DO know that being in America actually makes you sicker.” I followed up and asked Dr. Lakar why she believes staying in the U.S. makes you ‘sicker’ than living in your home country. She responded with “we have the healthy migrants research and hispanic paradox theories- first generation immigrants that arrive in the U.S. have better health status than their counterparts. First generation Mexican American’s have better birth outcomes having less prenatal care, living in poor economies, and less education; but once they get to the U.S. (after second generation) their health status will start to look worse.” I provide further information about the Healthy Migrant and Hispanic Paradox theories later in this paper.

Next, I asked a direct question that got to the core of my thesis “what are the specific aspects of the healthcare system that Mexican Americans tend to under-utilize?” She reiterated that generational experience makes a difference, “my family is 7th generation. Over the generations we

have learned how to use the U.S. health systems, but Mexican Americans don't use preventative care the same way if they'd just immigrated from Mexico. In general, Mexican Americans under-utilize prevention services and screenings, and prenatal care. We don't do anything until we're sick."

To add to my question, I wanted to explore the reasons behind this under-utilization. I inquired, "What are the top barriers that Mexican Americans report in terms of seeking out healthcare?" I explained that research shows the cost of transportation and high copay were the top two barriers for Mexican Americans to access the healthcare system. Dr. Lakar responded with "the thing that's preventing people from seeking care is public discourse. People are afraid of being deported and targeted, even if they're U.S. citizens. You can be detained at any time just for the way you look. The public charge rule makes people avoid care for what they or their families need even if they're legally eligible for it." I asked if this has changed in recent years, and she stated "it used to be language issues or culturally competent care, or time, because Latinos are known to have long hours, but now the real issue is rhetoric. People are coming for them."

Next, I asked her a question based on research that states the less acculturated one is, the less likely they'll use the healthcare system. I asked if this was true based on her experience, and she stated, "our healthcare system is difficult and complicated, I don't know if being acculturated actually makes a difference. I have a doctorate and every time my father goes to the hospital, I have to figure out what's going on. Our system is over complicated, over siloed, acculturation doesn't make that easier." This was provocative, as in her experience being acculturated does not improve healthcare utilization as she believes the overall system is flawed.

The last question I asked was rooted in research that states presenting specific models for culturally competent care to physicians can make the healthcare experience better for both the provider and patient. I asked, "Do you see any sort of culturally competent training being utilized in medical school or nursing, to increase Mexican American's level of comfort and trust in the healthcare system?" She stated that it's important to move past the idea of cultural competency and instead focus on cultural humility, a term that did not come up in my research. She stated, "cultural competency is a thing where you can check a box and say okay since I took a class on cultural competency, that's all I need to do. You can instead have cultural humility training, which is where medical and nursing schools create programs to help us learn to be better people. Part of this is understanding that people are individuals and come from different experiences. If we have the time

and space to do this, and know the questions to probe, we can have real conversations with people. Places that have gotten rid of disparities- it's about how we treat people and the social determinants of health."

Next, Dr. Lakar laughed as she stated "Cubans have a saying that I think is really helpful. Cuba integrates its public health with its medical programs, they don't have a separation like we do in the U.S. They say that every doctor needs to get 'knee to knee.' In order to serve the people you treat, you have to get down to whatever level your patient is on to understand their experience. If we can teach people THAT, and not just the prognosis of disease, or the idea that we have to meet a quota for insurance companies, we'd have better healthcare." Following the interview, I felt confident about the future of Latino health care and was happy to have Dr. Lakar assisting with future research to better understand Mexican Americans as a specific subgroup, instead of an aggregated group.

In comparing Dr. Lakar's answers to mainstream research, I reference the Chesney et al. (2019) study which found that increasing the level of acculturation from low to high doubles the odds of health service utilization for Mexican American populations. In other words, the more acculturated one is, odds are drastically higher they will utilize healthcare services when they see fit. When asking Dr. Lakar about this statistic, she disagreed. As stated above, she said that our healthcare system is so complicated, that even native-born educated Americans have trouble navigating its policies. Based on this difference in opinion, it was important to investigate the contrast between Dr. Lakar's opinion and the research in the field.

A study called "Acculturation and Self-Reported Health Among Hispanics" aimed to reach a better understanding of individuals self-reported health by investigating the relationship between self-reported health and acculturation, investigating its effect on general health status (Carroll et al., 2010). In this study, psychosocial measures like control, stress, depression, and social support were recorded in a standardized questionnaire and were given to (n=135) Hispanic participants. Results showed that Mexican American participants were "3.16 times more likely to report poor self-reported health compared to Anglo-oriented or more acculturated Hispanics" (Carroll et al., 2010). These results support the Chesney et al. (2019) study that the more acculturated one is, and the longer one resides in their host country, the better their perceived health status. Although studies show that acculturation does lead to better perceived health, it is important to take Dr. Dr.

Lakar's claims seriously and recognize that there are varying experiences within the U.S. healthcare system relating to acculturation.

Additionally, I found it interesting that Dr. Lakar stated being in the U.S. makes one sicker, because it would seem like part of the motivation for immigration to the U.S. comes from a hope of better medical services and healthcare abroad, not the belief that one's health status will decline. Dr. Lakar suggested that the "Hispanic Paradox Theory" and "Healthy Migrant Hypothesis" can explain this trend, so I found it important to further understand these theories. In a Meta-Analysis titled "Understanding the Hispanic Paradox" researchers reviewed multiple sources based on the health of Hispanics in the U.S. and aimed to explain the effect the Hispanic Paradox has on socioeconomic variables (Franzini et al., 2001).

The Hispanic Paradox is the idea that as a group, Hispanics rank low on various social measures like socio-economic status, education, and job classification compared to Blacks and Non-Hispanic Whites. But, despite these obstacles, Hispanics have lower mortality rates than their counterparts. Specifically, this study notes that the 1980 U.S. census found that mortality rates of individuals residing in the U.S. who were born outside the country (in other words, immigrants coming from other countries to the U.S.) were "consistently found to be lower for Hispanics compared to Blacks and Non-Hispanic Whites" (Franzini et al., 2001). Further supporting Dr. Lakar's points, research found that "Hispanic mortality rates were lower than those for Non-Hispanic Whites in all geographic regions in the U.S." when they initially migrated, but as the length of stay in the US increased, mortality rates increased (Franzini et al., 2001). These findings suggest that once immigrants come to the U.S., they become sicker than they were in their home country.

This meta-analysis additionally elaborated on the healthy migrant hypothesis, which is grounded in the belief that the healthiest and strongest members of a population migrate. Data from this study show that the mortality rate for immigrants is lower upon arrival to the U.S., supporting Dr. Lakar's point that one migrates to the U.S. while healthy and that subsequent health issues may arise after staying in the U.S. for longer periods of time (Franzini et al., 2001).

Moreover, the 1980 U.S. census reported that Cuban born males and females had higher mortality rates than non-Hispanic Whites, particularly for younger age groups. I found this statistic compelling, because Dr. Lakar believed that Cuban healthcare is better than the U.S. healthcare system, making it seem like Cubans would have a lower mortality rate. Based on this conflict of



opinion, I wondered if Dr. Lakar's mention of the "knee-to-knee" approach was as effective in Cuban healthcare as she believed.

In one study titled "Child Health in Cuba" researchers investigated the claim that healthcare in Cuba is at a "high level, and that child health in particular is excellent" (Rodriguez et al., 2008). If this hypothesis is true, it would provide evidence against the 1980's U.S. census data. Results from this study noted that mortality rates in Cuba are lower than that of wealthier neighboring countries, the United Kingdom, and the U.S. (Rodriguez et al., 2008). Interestingly, this supported Dr. Lakar's assertion, but counters the 1980 U.S. census data.

In order to reach a concrete conclusion about this differing in opinion, I was interested in exploring why Cuba's mortality rates are lower. I reviewed "The Curious Case of Cuba," which aimed to investigate reasons for Cuba's seemingly more effective healthcare systems than that of the U.S. Supporting Dr. Lakar's point that the knee to knee approach allows Cubans to prosper in relation to healthcare, this study explained that the Cuban healthcare system is based on the idea that "health workers should not only understand the health status of their community, but also the biological, social, cultural, and economic factors that affect it" (Rodriguez et al., 2008). Based on this conclusion it seems Cuba's "knee to knee" approach has lasting, positive effects on the health of Cuban youth. However, the overall data suggests conflicting opinions about Cuba's mortality rates, and thus we are unable to draw a concrete conclusion. Because of this, there should be further research done investigating Cuba's health outcomes in relation to other subgroups.

I was compelled to do more research on cultural humility training mentioned by Dr. Lakar in our interview. In an article titled "Integrating Cultural Humility into Health Care Professional Education and Training" I learned that cultural humility training is an add on to an already existing model of cultural competence. Researchers suggest expanding on cultural competence training to integrate "the concept of cultural humility into current training, which is vital in completing the current model, and can better prepare future professionals to address healthcare challenges with appropriate care" (Chang et al., 2010).

Researchers in this study proposed a new model that mixes cultural competency and cultural humility together, titled "QIAN Humbleness Training." This model suggests the importance of "self-Questioning and critique, bi-directional cultural Immersion, mutually Active-listening, and the flexibility of Negotiation" (Chang et al., 2010). This system aims to include not only the healthcare provider and his/her patients, but also the family, healthcare system, and health

community at large. Researchers believe the model could improve healthcare practices and “enhance exploration, comprehension, and appreciation of cultural orientations” at large (Chang et al., 2010).

Additionally, researchers at Creighton University organized a panel to discuss the possible effects a cultural humility program could have on the overall healthcare population. Panelists conferred that “cultural humility means that the future provider develops and practices a process of self-awareness and reflection to identify his/her own preconceptions and worldview compared to that of the patient and strive to respect any differences while optimizing patient care” (Alsharif, 2012).

Since cultural humility training is a relatively new phenomenon, researchers gave suggestions for basic principles of cultural humility training programs. Researchers state programs should be embedded into classroom lectures and practical experiences, that can “expose students to the educational outcomes for other healthcare professionals, emphasizing the core common competencies among them, provide simulation interactions in different settings and to challenge them with difficult practical situations that may involve issues within and outside their own profession” (Alsharif, 2012). Overall, research supports Dr. Lakar’s notion that cultural humility is an important addition to cultural competence, but there is more research needed to understand how to incorporate cultural humility into existing models, and what effects these newly developed models would have on the healthcare system at large.

Lastly, I compared Dr. Dr. Lakar’s suggestion of the “2018 Latina Maternal and Child Health Review” to my initial research. Generally, the data from the Latina Maternal and Child Health Review was more extensive and provided more analysis than any other scholarly journal I reviewed for this project. For example, statistics revealed that “more than 1/4th of U.S. Hispanic adults lacked a usual healthcare provider and reported obtaining no healthcare information from medical personnel” (Valerio, 2018). Further, researchers found that Latinos are less likely to be offered health insurance coverage through their employers; and for immigrant women, lack of access to healthcare can lead to chronic health conditions (Valerio, 2018). The data found that the cultural value *familismo* was a strong protective element against the “stresses in life,” as most Latino communities referred to *familismo* as “the importance of strong family loyalty, closeness and getting along with the nuclear family” which provided them with support in times of need (Valerio, 2018). The review also suggested that acculturation plays an important role in

determining health outcomes of immigrant populations, even though as stated above, this research seems to be debated.

Overall, I came across data that supported my hypothesis that Mexican Americans under-utilize the healthcare system. With a disconnect between Dr. Lakar's opinion and the research, it is important that researchers continue to study the effects of Latino and Mexican American under-utilization of healthcare. It is extremely detrimental to disaggregate data within the Hispanic population to better analyze the interactions between this population and the healthcare system at large.

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## So, She Speaks: An Analysis of *The Poet X: A Novel*

Hajar Bendada

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*The Poet X: A Novel* by Elizabeth Acevedo is a compelling story of how a young girl learns the power of challenging gender inequalities and other patriarchal standards within her society. As a coming of age novel, the book is constructed around a collection of poems that expand upon intersectional identities pertaining to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and culture (Luis, 85). By elaborating on the interaction of these complex identities through Xiomara's relationship with her brother Xavier and her mother, Acevedo critiques the narrow confinements of womanhood and gender expression in the Latinx cultural context.

Growing up in the streets of Harlem, New York, Xiomara Batista always struggled to confidently express her opinion. Greatly overwhelmed by the hypersexualized attention she receives both in public spaces and in school, Xiomara has always felt isolated in her experiences as an individual of both African and Latinx descent. With nobody to confide in, she pours all her feelings in a leather notebook that she keeps hidden under her bed. Recognizing Xiomara's literary brilliance, Xiomara's 10th grade English teacher invites her to attend the Poetry Slam club. Initially, Xiomara rejects the offer for fear that her mother would disapprove. When her mother discovers her relationship with a male classmate, she is furious and forces Xiomara to seek counseling with Pastor Sean. After admitting to Pastor Sean that she does not believe in God because he is too restrictive on women, Pastor Sean advises her to take a break from confirmation class and reflect on her connection with God. Xiomara then takes this opportunity to join the Poetry Slam Club where she discovers a safe place to speak out against the social injustices of her community. Using her newfound confidence and with the support of Pastor Sean, Xiomara reconciles with her mother and agrees to continue fostering their relationship through mutual trust and understanding. The whole family attends the Poetry Slam where Xiomara realizes just how similar her verses of expression and the verses of scripture can be.

One way that *The Poet X* explores themes of femininity and gender politics is through Xiomara's relationship with her brother Xavier. Unlike Xiomara who is expected to regularly uphold domestic duties and is forbidden from involving herself with the opposite sex, her mother's only expectation for Xavier is to attend church. Accordingly, Xiomara admits that she feels jealous of her brother. Not only does he have a more lenient set of standards, but he also has the privilege of socially exercising the fullness of his personality as an academically accomplished anime

fanatic. Meanwhile, Xiomara is regularly threatened to be sent back to her mother's country, the Dominican Republic, to have the “rebelliousness beaten out of her” until she conforms to the social standards of the faith. In an excerpt where she describes her emotions towards her brother, Xiomara states, “Twin is a genius [...] straight A’s since pre-K [...] he got into a specialized high school so I couldn’t even copy his homework [...] he is an award-winning bound book where I am the loose and blank pages” (Acevedo, 99). She goes on to state that her difficulty to reconcile her relationship with her brother ultimately derives from the fact that she feels obligated to protect him from the high school bullies who harass him for his feminine appearance-- even when he does not reciprocate the same protective spirit towards her: “He has no twin intuition! He doesn’t even get sympathy pains! He doesn’t randomly know that I had a bad day or [...] that I’m here at all” (Acevedo, 101).

As explained by Anthony Ocampo in his article titled “*Making Masculinity*,” behaviors exuding dominance and strength are “characterized as ‘masculine,’ [and] carry greater symbolic value than those associated with women which labeled as feminine,” making gender something that is performed (450). Subsequently, if a male or female should perform behaviors beyond the boundaries of what is interpreted as masculine and feminine, the male is emasculated and accused of being a homosexual, whereas the female is condemned for being too forceful and demanding (450). Having to bear the responsibility as the more “masculine” sibling to compensate for her brother’s attributes which are culturally defined to be fragile and therefore feminine, Xiomara challenges the traditional gender binary. As a result, she is chastised by her mother for assuming this masculine protective role, as she is still expected to uphold a feminine persona by her classmates and other members of society.

This rigid definition of permissible feminine behaviors is clearly reflected in her mother’s reaction when Xiomara comes home with bruised knuckles: “When we were little, I would come home with bleeding knuckles and Mami would gasp and shake me: ‘*Muchacha, siempre peleando!* Why can’t you be a lady? [...] This is not God’s way’” (45). When her mother sees scratch marks on her fists, she immediately concludes that Xiomara foolishly engaged in violence and immediately reprimands her. However, unbeknownst to her mother, Xiomara only acted in this way because she was trying to defend her brother so he “could walk away with his anime collection” (154). Xiomara’s relationship with her brother, although shaky, clearly illustrates how gender politics shape the way she navigates her place in society. The fact that she continues

to protect her brother demonstrates that Xiomara is not afraid of defining womanhood to be strong, selfless, and reliable, for those are the qualities she decides to emulate.

The intensity of the subclimax when Xiomara's mother discovers her relationship with her boyfriend further cements the disparity of gender roles in the Latinx context. After returning home from school, Xiomara's mother is harsh and she promptly forces Xiomara to repent to the Holy Virgin Mary by kneeling on a pile of rice and reciting verses of penitence. The intensity of the situation overall is enhanced with zoom-in, zoom-out tactics to expand this moment into multiple time dimensions as Acevedo conjures specific memories of Xiomara's past and weaves them into the present. One of the most powerful moments she recalls was her relationship with her mother before adolescence. As she reminisces about the past, she recounts, "when I was little, Mami was my hero. Because her hands will be scraped raw from work but she still folded them to pray... but then I grew breasts, and although she was always extra hard on me, her attention became something else, like she wanted to turn me into the nun she could never be" (211). In her childhood, Xiomara regarded her mother as a source of inspiration (5). However, after she grew older, her mother seized the opportunity to instruct her daughter that it is her responsibility to diffuse men's advances and that she would ultimately be the one to blame if she were "to be tempted" like Eve, engage in premarital physical intimacy, and become sinful (Anzaldúa, 6). Of course her mother's love for her was still intact. However, the avenue of this instruction-- a reflection of her mother's conservative Dominican upbringing-- leaves Xiomara to feel that she is a second class citizen in society for simply being a woman and maintaining control over her female identity and sexuality was immoral. Nonetheless, Xiomara still demonstrates her resistance towards her mother's traditional ideas by not allowing her conscious to be clouded by what her culture expects of her, as Xiomara later admits that she does not regret her relations with her boyfriend, but rather "getting caught" (240). In this way, Xiomara establishes that she does not ascribe to her mother's outdated definition of womanhood. Instead, Xiomara once again challenges the rigidity of conservative gender roles and how they are defined in the Latinx context by maintaining her own views on the matter.

*The Poet X: A Novel* by Elizabeth Acevedo explores topics relating to gender roles and femininity through elaborating on clashing intersectional identities and conservative perspectives. While Acevedo does discuss interpretations of womanhood and gender roles and how they are specifically defined in the Latinx culture, Acevedo's general message extends to readers of all

cultural contexts and societal alternatives as she encourages readers to negotiate their own identity in relation to cultural pressures and broader societal norms on their own terms.

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## **DLI and the Education of Mexican American Students in Elementary Schools**

Catherine Walsh

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The United States's public schooling system faces a serious, yet unresolved, issue regarding an educational achievement gap between white and non-white students. The country confronts this issue as a result of disparities in motivation stemming from external factors facing the student. In this paper, I argue that dual language immersion (DLI) education can help close the gap. DLI can create a productive environment for Hispanic/Latino elementary students, as illustrated by a kindergarten DLI teacher who uses culturally relevant practices and holds high expectations for her students.

As a society built on a racial hierarchy, it is not surprising that non-white students, namely Black and Latinx, struggle to keep up with their white counterparts (Nzai & Concepción Reyna, 2014). More specifically, within this non-white category, Hispanic students (individuals of Spanish or Latin American heritage) struggle academically more than any other ethnic group (Pew Research Center, 2019) and Mexican American students (individuals of Mexican descent) especially fall behind. According to Zusho and Kumar (2018), it is predicted that by 2050, no ethnic group will constitute more than 50% of the population in the United States (p. 62). This means that while there will not numerically be a minority and majority population, the hegemonic educational patterns, should they continue, will suggest otherwise. A dominant and subordinate group will still be clear in how students are educated if teaching styles continue cater to the dominant group. Ethnic and racial minorities already make up the majority of students attending U.S. public schools (Zusho & Kumar, 2018), so one must wonder why the achievement gap exists, why there is a lack of urgency to solve it, and how it may be solved. Lack of achievement by Mexican American elementary students is an especially urgent issue because, according to research, the education gap begins at the elementary level, as Mexican American children often arrive with a lower level than white counterparts and will remain behind if not helped (Nzai & Concepción Reyna, 2014, p. 45).

Historically, Mexican American children have been subjected to mistreatment by their schools throughout the 20th century. The low expectations held by teachers of their Chicax students (a non-binary identification used by individuals of Mexican descent that is often used interchangeably with "Mexican American") had grave consequences on their academic success, "they were not expected to become part of the local mainstream, and they were not expected to

attend school beyond the elementary school years” (Donato, 2003, p. 69). The reason for these low expectations were, in part, the massive migration of Mexican immigrants to the United States during the 20th century as a result American demand for cheap labor. As the Mexican and Mexican American labor force increased in the United States, the disadvantaged economic situation of this population was mistaken for being caused by cultural traits, which Romano (1968) called cultural determinism. This approach effectively blames Mexican Americans for the poor wages provided by worker contract programs like the Bracero Program. The unfortunate result of this linkage between class and culture was that Mexican Americans were seen as a “lazy” community whose lack of drive impoverished them. Additionally, children of contracted laborers had the lowest achievement level in their communities— race discrimination and violence largely kept these students out of school, as well as their families needing the child labor to survive. As a result, teachers had an overall feeling of indifference towards these children, as many left their elementary school anyway—one can observe how teachers’ historical indifference has manifested today in many ways. Segregated classrooms were justified by the “mental retardation” of Mexican- American children, based on prior low achievement by other Mexican American students who had been neglected in the classroom. Therefore, cultural determinism has left a lasting impact on this population, and especially on Chicanx elementary students. Because Mexican Americans were not expected to rise beyond their impoverished situation as manual laborers, they never achieved full acceptance into their local communities or even, one could argue, full citizenship in the United States.

Perhaps the best example of Chicanx students speaking out against discrimination in the schooling system in the 20th century is the East Los Angeles walkouts of 1968, in which students of the local high school protested the miseducation of Chicanxs. They mainly protested the tracking of Chicanx students toward vocational areas, the lack of representation among educators, lack of bilingual education, and corporal punishment. There was a clear desire among the population to be more than just a source of labor, and this had a major impact on activism going forward. Necessary attention was brought to the mistreatment of Chicanx students; bicultural and bilingual education was increased locally and nationally, higher educational attainment was more readily available to Mexican Americans, and Chicanx and Latinx studies arose as a field of study (Galán, 1996).

In the context of Mexican American elementary education, this activism laid the foundation for the current state of the schooling system today as this population continues to fight against stereotypes. Young students are of utmost importance in this discussion, as they are the most impressionable and are easily influenced by their teachers and curriculum. Therefore, if a Mexican American elementary student receives a poor education, it is more likely that they will continue to struggle academically. An overall lack of culturally relevant curriculum, among other factors, often means less academic success, and thus less future economic success (Nzai & Concepción Reyna, 2014, p. 50). Therefore, there is a need to find ways to address this achievement gap between Mexican American students and their white counterparts so that this population does not suffer, which can be done by capitalizing on the richness they bring with them to schools.

There is a string of existing debates within this topic. At the surface level, it is easy to assume that Mexican American children struggle in school because they often come from a low-income, low-motivation background. Nzai and Concepción Reyna (2014), contend that Mexican American students are given inadequate education partly due to lack of equipment, resources, space, curriculum, instruction, and attendance (p. 44). While having less resources than their peers is an economic factor in impeding the academic success of Chicanx students, many scholars also argue that the instruction and curriculum in place in many traditional elementary school settings sets minority students, especially those learning a second language, up for failure. (Ekiaka Nzai & Concepción Reyna, 2014; Garza & Garza, 2010).

This suggests that a link still exists between socioeconomic background and education and it is reflected in how Chicanx students perform and how they are taught. The historical false relationship between culture and class among the Mexican American community has remained so that students today internalize the oppression they have encountered. Therefore, low income and low socioeconomic resources only contributes further complicate the mindset Mexican American students may have regarding their ability to learn.

Many researchers agree that the concept and implementation of culturally responsive teaching and the anti-oppressive pedagogy approach is important. Culturally responsive teaching is defined by Ladson-Billings (2014) as the “systematic and intensive use of the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for students” (2014, p. 45). This style of teaching is often not used or used unsuitably— while its goal is to teach “to and through” the strengths of students, teachers

lack the “functional fitness” to put the model into practice (Nzai & Reyna, 2014, p. 46). There is a dilemma here, then, as a Chicana student does not have the resources to be motivated to achieve academically because the teacher does not know how to provide that motivation. The anti-oppressive pedagogy approach similarly proposes classroom practices that cater to the “Other”, aimed at radically changing the student and society’s idea about the Other from the same or different cultural background.

Most researchers of Mexican American elementary education would agree that a lack of understanding of the culture by the educator leads to lower performance by the student, which is a modernized concept of the “labeling theory” closely related to cultural determinism. In this same vein, the identity-based motivation model, according to Destin and Oyserman (2010), shows that “imagined college-bound” identities cue school-focused behavior if they are salient and feel relevant to current choice options”(p.1). By this the authors mean that if a student feels that they have the support and the expectation to achieve a certain goal, they will apply themselves in order to reach it.

This model carries over into education because non-white students more often feel that less is expected of them, and with lower expectations comes lower performance (Muñoz, 2004, p. 7). If a student feels that they have the support and the expectation to achieve a certain goal, they will apply themselves in order to reach it. Therefore, this lack of motivation does not only come from internal expectations, but also structural inequities. For example, teachers tend to be White females who hold short-term high expectations, but in the long-term do not set their students up for academic success (R. Garza & E. Garza, 2010, p. 200). Inevitably, no matter how well-intentioned a teacher, implicit bias causes an inconsistency in their definition of a successful student (resilient, persistent, determined, and college bound) and their expectation of them in the classroom (R. Garza & E. Garza, 2010, p. 203). Thus, a lack of knowledge of a non-white student’s culture causes a teacher’s bias to take over, causing them to subconsciously have lower expectations of that student (Nzai & Concepción Reyna, 2014, p. 51).

Therefore, although blatant racism by teachers in elementary education settings is rarer today than it was in the past, microaggressions and implicit bias still exist and take a psychological toll on Mexican American students, hence the existing achievement gap. Put simply, the U.S. schooling system exists under a hegemonic system of assimilation which affects a public school’s environment and curriculum. R. Garza and E. Garza (2010) argue that there is an invisible gap,

meaning that non-white students are never taught the exclusive knowledge and experiences they need to help them develop the resiliency they must have to navigate a system that is not designed for them (2010, p. 204). This invisible gap notion adds to the culturally responsive teaching that is needed at the mezzo level, yet calls out the institution itself for creating this hegemonic atmosphere in which non-white students exist. Public schools have failed to develop an educational environment that is effective for and relevant to the needs of students of color, starting as early as elementary school. The system is one of assimilation, Garza and Garza (2010) says, and will continue to be if the goal is to teach students to operate in the “White ways of knowing” (p. 205).

While these concepts are generally agreed upon, there are also multiple contradictory ideas within this field of research. The first one is between isolation of minority students who struggle academically into unconventional schooling settings and integration of them into a traditional education setting that may set them up for failure. Ladson-Billings’s sociocultural theory (1995) expresses that learning operates through social interaction, causing researchers to fear that alternative education does not offer the same wide range of scholastic opportunity and that it is just keeping students in the same cycle of poverty. There is a worry that isolating Mexican American elementary students and making them think that they need to “return to normalcy”, or traditional education, further excludes them from general society. The question is: Is keeping struggling students in conventional academic settings ultimately benefiting them or hurting them? Will moving them to a different, non-traditional school negatively affect them? One author that focuses specifically on Mexican American students argues that while alternative education for Chicana students is effective in theory, the way it has been put into practice thus far is not—“While generally well intentioned, [alternative education] is unlikely to provide them with the academic skills and critical thinking abilities necessary to mitigate the barriers to educational equity and social mobility”(Muñoz, 2004, p. 15).

The next debate is about how this achievement gap can be fixed. One article talks about the “method fetish”, causing failure to see how widespread the issue is. They argue that just changing the curriculum and the teachers’ attitudes will not solve the problem, that there is a need for macro-level, systematic changes to policies which will improve conventional elementary education nationally. The reality is that the low achievement of Mexican American elementary students occurs at the institutional level and cannot be changed through a simple mindset switch.

“Reversing the persistent, pervasive, and disproportionately negative outcomes of Chicana students in U.S. schools is beyond the scope of any one programmatic, especially instructional, implementation” (Orozco, 2012, p. 90). This is where the discussion of dual language immersion (DLI) education programs come in, which seem to offer a balance between traditional school and alternative education. There is a debate on how well DLI programs serve Latinx students.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, “Dual language education programs are a type of bilingual education program in which students are taught literacy and academic content in English and a partner language. Dual language programs aim to help students develop high levels of language proficiency and literacy in both program languages, attain high levels of academic achievement, and develop an appreciation and understanding of multiple cultures” (2015). While hypothetically, this program could benefit students of all backgrounds, Valdez, Delavan and Freire (2016) would suggest that there is privilege among those who are white, wealthy, and/or English first-language speakers involved in the access to this type of education: “Analysis of the demographics of schools housing DL programs between 2005 and 2014 showed a statistically significant drop in access for those without the three forms of privilege under study.” Therefore, while some would argue that DLI programs are designed for Latinx students who may struggle in a traditional educational setting, there is an argument from authors like Valdez, Delavan and Freire that in reality, these programs have been mainstreamed and tailored to those with white racial privilege, wealth, and English privilege.

I conducted a phone interview with a teacher at a K-5 DLI public charter school, *Nuestro Mundo*. The teacher started with *Nuestro Mundo* eight years ago when it was first founded and has an integral role in creating the curriculum for kindergarten students. On their website, *Nuestro Mundo*’s mission statement is: “To develop literacy in both languages, preparing students for success in an increasingly global economy, and to promote acceptance and understanding of cultural differences and strengths.” Therefore, my question for my interviewee was whether she saw these goals manifesting in reality. I asked if she believed that the dual language education curriculum she teaches is drastically different from that of a traditional elementary school:

Very, it’s very forward-thinking. We are a welcoming school as well as we teach acceptance of all genders and gender preferences and any color. And it’s something that’s part of our curriculum, we teach it, we say it, we do it, we

incorporate it into our everyday teaching. It's a very unique school because it's the only fully dual language school in Madison that's a 90-10 model... And the reason for that is because we believe in immersion, complete immersion. So, we start them younger with more Spanish language throughout the day so that they'll retain it more and use it more.

The teacher went on to explain their unique 90-10 style, in which teachers speak 90% Spanish and 10% English to their students and work their way to 50-50 throughout the year. With regard to the demographic of her classroom, she said an average kindergarten class had a large population of Early Language Learner (ELL) students coming in with some Spanish or Hispanic background, a small percentage of African American students, and another percentage of White students who speak English. She estimated that about 90% of her Latino students were Mexican or Mexican American. According to the teacher, dual language immersion is targeted at ELL students to replace an ELL program. This brought me to my next question about whether such a wide range of cultural backgrounds and in Spanish language made it more difficult to teach some students than others:

I would say the kids that have the most challenges is more so based on their socioeconomic background. That always makes the biggest difference, especially with regard to their family because even if the family can't speak the language, if the child is developing a lot of vocabulary at home, whether English or Spanish, those are life skills they're going to have that they can carry on. Students need to be able to articulate themselves, so if you have a child who has two parents at home that eat dinner together every night, and they're spoken with, not at, it makes a huge difference in how they communicate and how they are able to communicate with adults. If you have a kid whose mom works night shifts and don't get to see their mom that often... they're not getting a lot of verbal engagement.

This is something that the teacher says she has noticed in both rural and urban settings. Regarding her teaching style, I asked her about whether culturally responsive teaching was a component of

her curriculum, and whether she found it important. She spoke passionately about how important it was to her to create an inclusive environment:

I'm not going to teach them about the first Thanksgiving or the pilgrims and Indians, because that's not culturally relevant to them, and it's not academically relevant to them. We talk more about what can we be thankful for—I asked them to tell me what foods they'll see at their Thanksgiving dinner, and some kids said pizza, some kids said frijoles, some kids said arroz. And we included all of that [on the board] because I know that, being Hispanic myself, that it wasn't the traditional dinner, so it was important that we included everyone's food.

Because the teacher has a large amount of authority over the curriculum, she has been able to create units that ensure that the foundations of Spanish language become ingrained in her students. While she believes that an abundance of vocabulary, practice, and writing will create a bilingual brain, she also suggests that parental involvement and motivation is a factor in a kindergarten student's success:

It makes a huge difference when a child is excited to learn, when they're excited about learning a second language. I've been in classrooms where students hated it, they didn't want anything to do with it, and they weren't getting that extra push or excitement from home, either, so it's like they came to school and they just resented it... But it needs to be celebrated—that's the best word to describe it—that you're learning a second language, that you get to be bilingual.

It was clear that the teacher had a strong passion for dual language education, she only wished that more people felt the same. After moving from a city, where parents needed more convincing to put their child in this type of education, she feels that the Nuestro Mundo community truly understands the value of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Here [in Madison], I feel an overwhelming sense of families who want their children to be here, want their children to learn a second language. So, you get



kids coming in understanding that they're raising the power of the language. Especially when you walk through the doors here at Nuestro Mundo, you can tell that bilingualism is really important to everybody. So, the excitement part of it helps students learn more because they have to want to learn more because they can choose to tune me out completely or focus on what I'm saying to try to problem solve on how to say it themselves.

I could tell that she could talk for hours about her students, the school, and the value of dual language education— it felt that she often stopped herself in fear of boring me. The next question I asked she seemed a bit hesitant to answer: Do you notice a connection between socioeconomic background and motivation? She tip-toed around her answer, which seemed to be out of respect for her students and their parents.

I have seen [a lack of motivation] happen, just because some students that come from a less advantaged socioeconomic background have parents who aren't as educated or don't have a higher learning degree. [Their parents] may not see the whole purpose of it, they see it as a Spanish class... when really, it's more than that, it's developing a whole new brain, technically... When you get the bigger picture, that helps, but I think sometimes parents with different socioeconomic backgrounds don't have that understanding.

We went on to talk about how her observations lined up with my research, which I told her were quite similar. I then asked her if she holds high expectations for her students, to which she quickly responded:

I absolutely do... Kindergarten is a lot different than it used to be, it's not just naps and snacks, so am I going to expect them to be able to read and write by the end of the year? Yeah! I'm going to expect them to be able to do mental math because I'm going to teach them to do that. Do I expect them to be able to solve certain problems on their own? Of course. Am I always going to be there to help them if they need it? Also yes.... You don't know what they're capable of until

you try. So I say, why not give them the opportunity to show you what they can do, rather than thinking about what they can't do?

The teacher also spoke a bit about her opinion of traditional, monolingual elementary schools and their effect on ELL students especially. She spoke frustratedly about how teachers often ignore these students' strengths.

... And that's why dual language schools really are the best place for students who are bilingual or come from a different language background because they aren't tossing aside all the skills that they already have. If you think about it, a bilingual child has more skills and problem solving than a monolingual child does. They are constantly problem solving. I have seen it happen where they think that [Hispanic students] can't do as much. But, it's not who you're teaching, it's how you're teaching.

In this interview, I was able to get the personal perspective of a teacher who teaches Mexican American elementary students in an alternative, dual language setting. While it would have been interesting to hear from a white, female teacher who teaches Chicana students in a more traditional setting, as they were often criticized in my research, the interviewee effectively highlighted the practices an elementary teacher *should* use. Much of what she said about her view of her students and the creation of culturally responsive curriculum lined up with what researchers often called the ideal method of teaching. What was most refreshing about the interview was her positive attitude towards dual language elementary education. She brought a sense of excitement and passion for teaching that undoubtedly affects her students and their desire to learn.

This interview explored DLI education at the micro and mezzo level, where disparities in motivation and academic success are more clearly visible and better researched as one can connect individual and internal factors of motivation to aspects of a student's community. The teacher gave insight into how to motivate such a wide range of students, who come from different backgrounds. It is undoubtedly no easy task to tailor her teaching style to the needs of every individual student, but it seems that this is what she does. Based on my research, the identity-based motivation theory that was mentioned in the review, in a community context, creates a

disagreement for students of low income and minority backgrounds. Students who grow up in neighborhoods with higher than average unemployment and poverty are provided limited exposure to adults who are college graduates, and instead exemplifies an adult “becoming a paid worker who can earn a living and support a family” (Destin, & Oyserman, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, a non-white student, who often comes from the low-income population, lacks motivation to achieve a higher education from their community as they lack the example of someone who sought a higher education. At the same time, schools often fail to provide culturally responsive teaching to non-white students. That is why I wondered, during the interview, how she, as a teacher, catered her motivational abilities.

The interview confirmed much of what I had taken from my research. I was mostly interested in her observations of socioeconomic background and its relationship to motivation, and while she did not necessarily know much about the specific differences between Mexican American students’ parents and other parents, she did surprisingly notice that a lack of knowledge about dual language education by a parent often correlated with their socioeconomic background. She hypothesized that this relationship was because these parents had not been surrounded by a supportive, culturally responsive educational environment during their youth, and therefore did not know how to motivate their own children. This hypothesis compares interestingly to the research I did on parental involvement— in some journals, researchers reported that parents of ethnic minority students, especially immigrant parents, have been found to hold higher aspirations for their children, compared to any other group (Murguía & Telles, 1996, p. 280).

On the other hand, a different study goes into more detail, saying that second generation students had higher performance than third generation students, indicating that the level of motivation from migrant parents was stronger than assimilated parents’ ability to better orient their children into society (López, 2016, p. 15). While this data does not speak directly to socioeconomic background, it is also true that a higher percentage of Hispanic families live in poverty than White families. The teacher’s observation does not prove either of these perspectives on parental motivation, but it does show that there is a distinction in motivation levels that is noticeable in a present-day academic setting.

At the same time, the interviewee did confirm that parental motivation is not the deciding factor in a child’s success. She said in her interview that, despite her students all starting at different levels, they all improve drastically by the end of the year. Her own statistics show that

she makes a conscious effort to not see students through a socioeconomic lens. She holds them to the same standard, no matter what. This invites the question— does a teacher’s instruction have a stronger effect than a parent’s ability to motivate? Perhaps this is what researchers should be looking into. My research did not compare these two sources of motivation, however one journal did mention that Mexican American students’ typically lower academic performance causes educators to assume racial and cultural “inferiority” in language. This expands the idea of cultural determinism, as teachers tend to base their judgement of their students on socioeconomic status, parents’ lack of education, and parents’ perceived lack of interest. Therefore, while there is not a clear indication of which source of motivation is stronger, there is certainly a correlation between a student’s parents and their teacher regarding how that student is treated.

I was also interested to learn about the dual language model, and what aspects of it especially benefited those Mexican American elementary students who struggle in a traditional setting. In addition to this, not only was I curious about the interviewee’s teaching style, but her curriculum, too. As an example, she told me a little bit about how she teaches vocabulary. She explained to me the concept of ‘TPR’, Total Physical Response, a tactic used especially at the beginning of a student’s education. TPR, for her, often means physically showing and drawing for her students the words that she is teaching them. “For example,” she said,

“Every week we do a letter. We practice the sound it makes, we practice what syllables you can make with that letter, and we go over all of the words that begin with that letter... I have them come up with the words— even if they don’t know how to say it completely, they can describe it. Then, I get them to help me draw it and we put the picture and the words next to it; and that stays up all year long, they make their own vocabulary wall... That’s a big way to teach vocabulary in the beginning, put the words in sentence frames... You just surround them with it. You put it in their math, you include it in their free time, you keep that central theme throughout whatever you’re teaching...

I then told her about how when I was learning Spanish in my traditional academic setting, that we would learn the same vocabulary for a week then go on to the next set, which was extremely difficult in the long run because when it came to a point where we had to apply what we had

learned, everyone had forgotten that vocabulary. This concept of an “all-encompassing” style of teaching is intriguing to me in this sense because the teacher is able to incorporate Spanish into every aspect of her students’ education, simulating the use of Spanish in real life by putting vocabulary into every possible situation in which they would need to use it. The TPR style of teaching was not brought up in my research, it helped me expand my knowledge of how teachers motivate their students in a more general sense. This tactic seems culturally responsive, an important characteristic of inclusive teaching as the review mentioned, because it utilizes the skills that every student possesses, regardless of their background. The “all-encompassing” approach allows students to take home with them the knowledge they learn in their dual language school, they are surrounded by Spanish even if their parental situations vary.

With that said, while the interview showed me only a small fraction of the information about dual language education and the perspective of only one teacher, it seems that many aspects of this style of schooling can be applied to a traditional school setting in order to make it more culturally responsive and effective in teaching foreign languages. What is lacking in the conventional teaching style can be found in a dual language teaching style. For example, as was mentioned in the review, functional fitness of teachers ideally means the “outcome of positive effort manifested by the suitability of outsiders’ internal capabilities to meet the external challenges of the environment” (Nzai & Concepción Reyna, 2014, p. 50). In an academic context, it is interpreted that the success of a student should be the result of a teacher putting aside their own implicit and explicit biases in order to help their student succeed by being knowledgeable of their needs and their culture. This is an important asset for a teacher to have, yet according to research it is severely lacking in the traditional school setting. From interviewing the teacher, functional fitness of teachers in dual language education is an integral part of its goals and expectations. The interviewee herself is certainly a good example of a teacher who is sensitive to the cultures and backgrounds of her students and makes sure to include them into her curriculum.

I did not necessarily get the impression that the teacher wanted every single child to have a dual language education, but that she wanted people to have a better understanding of what it is and what its benefits are. In the interview, she mentioned that this type of education was more targeted towards ELL students, who are unable to communicate or learn effectively or fluently in English and often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds. What I believe she meant is that dual language education is more of a necessity for some students than it is for others—

– that although learning a second language, in her opinion, is beneficial to any child, dual language education is especially helpful to ELL students, many of whom are Mexican American. The interview certainly expanded my knowledge of what teaching such a wide range of Spanish skill-levels looks like, and it is certainly not an easy task. Because the teacher grew up in a schooling system which discriminated against her ethnicity and underestimated her potential, she is now able to take her experience and prevent her own students from feeling how she did as a child. As was mentioned in the research, students who are not white and/or of a middle-class background can easily feel that they are held to a lower standard by their teachers and the system itself. The interviewee defies this norm by refusing to allow her students to be belittled by their teacher and the school's curriculum.

To conclude, in this analysis and interview, disparities in educational achievement caused by unequal external structures and its impact on students' academic outcomes was discussed, with the clear distinction that when students internalize the negative messages they receive, their academic performance is affected negatively. This lack of motivation occurs at the micro, mezzo, and macro level due to internal and external factors which affect a student of color's ability to find cultural relevance to their education. Overall, there is a need for an anti-oppressive, pedagogical approach: "Classroom practices that cater to the "Other", aimed at radically changing the student and society's ideas about the Other from the same or different cultural background"(Nzai & Concepción Reyna, 2014, p. 51). The argument is that Mexican American elementary students will continue to perform at lower levels in a traditional academic setting if their teachers and community continue to hold them at lower standards, as they will have less motivation to succeed and will less likely seek higher education (Destin, & Oyserman, 2010, p. 848). Therefore, teachers' bias and the inherently exclusive curriculum of conventional education encourage isolation between white and non-white students, which creates an achievement gap between the two groups. The question remains, however: what does it truly mean for a student to be motivated and how does it vary from student to student? More importantly, how can we help Mexican American elementary students, who are still extremely impressionable, feel motivated to succeed academically? Could dual language education be the answer?

The interview with a teacher at a dual language program opened my eyes to the possibility of an effective alternative education for Mexican American elementary students. I believe that this type of education is more than just "experimental", I believe that it is a new, refreshing way to

learn a second language while also creating a safe and inclusive environment for students. To receive a different style of education does not have to mean the isolation of “Other” students that some alternative schools cause. Rather, a different type of education like dual language can mean complete inclusivity of all elementary students in order to foster a motivational environment like the environment my interviewee created in her kindergarten classroom. Future research should be in this dual language education field to explore how it can become a widespread practice. Perhaps this breakthrough form of teaching can produce the outcomes, the better academic achievement of Mexican American elementary students, that traditional schooling cannot.

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# **Learning Beyond School: After-School Programs and their Potential to Bridge Academic and Cultural Barriers for Students**

Sara Mulrooney

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of culturally-focused after-school programs and their potential as a means of achieving educational equity. Studies show that Latinx students face unique educational challenges that can put them at a disadvantage to their peers. After-school programs offer the distinctive opportunity to utilize out-of-school time for productive, guided learning. Often, their primary function is formal learning and academic assistance, but they are also capable, with proper leadership and coordination, of being crucibles of informal learning through enriching extra-curricular activities. In addition, after-school educators wear many hats – not only are they coordinators or tutors, but also leaders, counselors, or mentors. Cultural focus in after-school programs can be a catalyst for community- and relationship-building, and can have a positive effect on students' educational achievement.

I interviewed an employee of Centro Hispano's Juventud after-school program at in Madison, Wisconsin. During the fall semester of 2019, I volunteered as one of Juventud's tutors and became familiar with the program through that experience. According to Centro Hispano, the "Juventud Program provides academic support, parent engagement, and leadership development to middle school-aged Latino and Spanish speaking youth and their families. Services include tutoring, career, cultural and leadership workshops, guest speakers and field trips." As I worked with student participants in this particular program, I became curious about the broader role that after-school programs may play in educational success, particularly that of Latinx youth. The interview shed light on the connections between the research I read and my personal experiences volunteering with the program. By understanding the interviewee's role and her perceptions of her students' experiences, we can see how these types of programs can have a lasting effect on student's success, academically, socially, and emotionally.

## **Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the effects of after-school programs on the academic success of Latinx students and the possibility of resolving the educational gap present between Latinx students and their Anglo peers. Studies show that Latinx students often

face unique educational challenges that can prevent academic achievement. The purpose of this paper is to examine the effectiveness of culturally-focused after-school programs and their potential as a means of achieving educational equity. When paired with the interview of an employee at an after-school program, this literature review gives insights into the effectiveness of culturally-focused after-school programs. This review investigates the experiences of both immigrant and U.S.-born students. As Lee and Hawkins (2008) point out, “much of the education literature and research on immigrant students has focused on schools. Given that children spend only 20% of their time in schools, it is important that researchers also examine the influence of other environments” (p. 52). After-school programs have the potential to be a highly influential opportunity for academic success as well as social and emotional learning for students, and when focused on historically marginalized communities, they could be significant in reconciling differences in educational achievement.

The existing literature on culturally-focused after-school programs is limited, so in order to expand my research, I divided my literature review into four main categories, based on the primary functions of after-school programs. First, I examined studies of the impact of after-school programs in general, to better understand their use and functions across the nation. Next, I examined studies on culturally-responsive and bilingual counseling, as after-school programs are typically not simply about academics, but also mentorship and social learning. Often, these types of programs naturally offer a friendly learning community and a holistic educational approach that is not offered in school, which may benefit student’s social and emotional wellbeing. Then, I considered the effect of having educators who are representative the student body and greater community they serve; this issue pertains to after-school educators as well. When examining culturally-focused after-school programs, specifically, it is important to consider representation. Educators with similar backgrounds as the students they teach can make deeper connections and better understand their students. Finally, I looked into personal experiences and case studies of multicultural or culturally-focused after-school programs to gain perspective on these types of programs, although it was through an admittedly limited lens, as research on this particular subject is rather sparse.

Millions of children are enrolled in after-school programs across the nation (Dietel, 2009). They are commonly located in both schools and community organizations, like childcare centers or religious institutions (“FYI,” 1993). They have many benefits, from academic achievement, to

social learning, and to reduction of problematic behavior. According to Maestas and Gaillot (2010), “out-of-school-time programs targeting personal and social skills significantly improve students’ self-perceptions, school bonding (positive feelings and attitudes about school), positive social behaviors, achievement test scores, and school grades while reducing problem behaviors and drug use” (p. 8). Lewis (2000) emphasizes the importance of keeping young people engaged in productive activities after school, as most risky youth behavior occurs during after-school hours. Successful after-school programs do not only assist students academically, but also benefit them in implicit ways.

After-school programs have the potential to be highly beneficial, but must have a goal of long-term development, coordinating activities with a particular mission in mind. Most have a focus on homework help and include supplemental activities. In culturally-focused after-school programs, these may take the form of guest speakers, field trips, or workshops that cultivate cultural community building or leadership skills, for example. Successful after-school programs do not rely on the same modality of learning as school, that is, simply completing two hours of homework, as this tends to cause students to disengage (Lewis, 2000). Instead, they integrate formal learning, like homework help and tutoring, with informal learning, like developmentally enriching activities and mentorship. Effective after-school programs reach out to all students, building up their strengths, focusing on community needs, and assisting adults and teachers to share knowledge with students (Lewis, 2000).

Results of after-school programs also depend on the degree to which students are engaged. There are several important factors that affect students’ academic success in after-school programs, including attendance (how often students attend), intensity (amount of time spent in programs during a given period), duration (students’ history of attendance and total years of participation), and breadth (variety of activities offered) (Dietel, 2009). For significant academic improvement to occur as a result of participation in an after-school program, students need to attend consistently for a long period of time, but after-school programs may have other goals, like providing a safe and nurturing environment for students, that can be achieved regardless of attendance (Dietel, 2009).

Maestas and Gaillot (2010) examined one specifically “Hispanic After-School Program.” It had the goal of “early identification and treatment of mental-health issues, and promotion of ethnocultural identity” (p. 9). Evaluation took place over four years. The results were that the

“treatment group had greater gains in perceived academic status, physical attributes, happiness, anxiety reduction, popularity, and better school adjustment” (p. 9).

Halpern’s (1999) study on after-school programs for low-income children offers a unique look into the benefits and challenges of offering these types of programs for students who may not otherwise have access to them. Programs like these allow children’s after-school hours to be spent engaged in productive activities with adults and caregivers. Another benefit is developmental support, as young people “benefit from safe, protected space to play, an extra measure of adult attention, additional help with homework, and greater opportunity to participate in art and sports activities” (p. 82). However, programs can get expensive; the more parents are asked to pay, the less likely they are to enroll their children in after-school programs. There is a wide variety of providers, like schools and community organizations, but there remains a sizeable gap between need and supply. As Lewis (2000) mentions, successful after-school programs do not only focus on students at risk, but on all students, catering to the community’s needs and strengthening all students’ academic potential.

According to Halpern (1999), common challenges that these kinds of after-school programs face are concerns about program quality, not having enough staff, being too schedule-bound, inability to gauge interest and keep children engaged, and not having enough activities to do. However, they still keep kids involved after school, and of course have the potential to be improved. Halpern (1999) suggests that through improvements in facilities, staff, and funding, after-school programs for low-income students can become more effective. Few programs have regular access to special facilities, like libraries, parks, and dedicated art or music space, and many rely on shared or borrowed space. Staffing presents a challenge in hiring qualified staff, paying adequate salaries, and preventing high rates of turnover. Volunteers are part of the solution, as they can assure individual attention for students, but after-school programs cannot be grown simply through volunteerism. Financing is overall inadequate; part of the solution can be government subsidies or charging fees for more advantaged families. Halpern’s (1999) interpretation for the future is to increase coverage with new programs and sites, strengthen programs and address program quality, expand funding through flexible public financing, and articulate a role for after-school programs. They should be available and accessible to all, as well as fully capable of serving the developmental needs of children, so that all young people can have the same opportunities, regardless of advantage.

After-school programs are more than just homework help and educational activities. They offer a different type of learning than the kind offered in schools and give opportunities for social and emotional development. Adults, staff, and tutors can be seen as mentors or counselors as well as educators. Through the lens of counseling, we can gain more perspective on dual-language immersion, bilingual, or culturally-focused after-school programs. There are some challenges to counseling, especially with a language barrier. In their article on counselling Latinx immigrant students, Thorn and Contreras (2005) point out that “aside from problems associated with any middle school student, Latino middle school immigrants have a number of specific issues that differ from their Anglo counterparts and from Latino students raised in the United States” (p. 167). Newcomer students may struggle to adjust to a new environment and experience stress not only academically, but also in their social and personal lives. All at once, they must get used to a new climate, new food, and a new place to live, while juggling family responsibilities and sometimes catching up on missed time in school.

Unsurprisingly, having counselors present who speak the same language as students can be extremely helpful. Regarding culturally-focused after-school programs, a great part of mentors’ connections with students can be through shared language and background. Bilingual counseling “allows the counselor to establish a supportive relationship with Latino middle school immigrant students more rapidly. Allowing students to convey their thoughts and feelings in Spanish helps overcome issues common to new immigrant middle school students” (Thorn & Contreras, 2005, p. 169). Thanks to this additional comfort of being able to communicate with someone in their chosen language, “students feel less pressure to rapidly adapt to their new culture and feel more comfortable integrating their values with their new cultural values using educated choices” (Thorn & Contreras, 2005, p. 169). Students who feel safe and comfortable in their after-school programs are bound to learn and interact better.

Culturally-focused after-school programs offer the benefit of having teachers, mentors, or role-models who represent the students they serve. Staff at after-school programs are educators, and studies show that having educators who are representative of their students opens the door for greater academic success. According to Ross, Rouse, & Bratton (2010), “Latinos are the largest and fastest growing minority particularly among children, who have the most at stake in the education system” (p. 69). The national drop-out rate for Latinx students is higher than other groups, they receive lower scores on standardized tests than Anglo students, and they face

immigration-related challenges, like being labeled as having “limited English proficiency.” However, studies show that the more Latinx teachers there are, the better Latinx students perform. Latinx teachers “have a significant and direct impact on Latino educational performance,” greater and more direct effect than school boards, and they “play a prominent role in the educational achievement of Latino students” (Ross, Rouse, & Bratton, 2010, p. 83). These ideas about representation in education can reasonably be applied to out-of-school education as well. Program coordinators, educators, tutors, or mentors who share similar backgrounds as their students potentially have a greater benefit to students’ success in the programs.

Furthermore, teachers have an important impact in the labeling of students; teachers label students as either good or bad, and students accept and internalize the label, directly impacting their academic achievement. According to So (1987), “Hispanic teachers have a much higher expectation of Hispanic students than their Anglo colleagues of Hispanic students” and offer “more encouragement to Hispanic students than Anglo teachers offer to Hispanic students” (p. 6). In addition, “Hispanic students receive a more positive treatment from Hispanic teachers than they receive from Anglo teachers” (So, 1987, p. 7). Representation is important in all forms of education, starting with schools and perhaps extending beyond formal learning to after-school programs as well. Educators in after-school programs who put great faith and encouragement in their students will have a positive effect on their students. In culturally-focused programs, this connection could be made stronger through community building.

Lee and Hawkins’ (2008) study on community-based after-school programs is a strong example of the impacts that culturally-responsive programs can have on students and families. Their study focused on after-school programs at three community learning centers with multiracial populations, a large portion of which were Hmong families. They found that “through collaboration, schools and community based after-school programs may be able to bridge the academic and cultural barriers that marginalize low-income immigrant youth” (51). While middle-class youth participate in myriad extracurricular activities, most immigrant youth lack access and instead convene in their neighborhoods and community centers. Participation in community-based after-school programs “positively affects youth development and adjustment of students identified as at risk” (53).

The after-school programs examined by Lee and Hawkins achieved their goals through educational activities, cultural experience and relationship building, bridging to families, and an

acculturation without assimilation approach. They provided homework help and volunteer tutors, formal reading and writing instruction, and other supplemental educational activities. The programs were culturally responsive, creating “spaces where youth can express their Hmong and American identities” and used knowledge of Hmong culture and family structure to connect to the youth in ways that schools could not (54). The staff employed language of “family,” encouraging relationship building and close social relationships among the youth. The staff’s knowledge of Hmong culture allowed them to bridge the gap between the mainstream American educational system and Hmong parents’ values and understandings of education. They encouraged students to pick up some aspects of the dominant society necessary for success while maintaining cultural norms. Despite the fact that this study focused on Hmong students, it seems that the approaches used by the programs in the study could be applied in other communities and culturally-responsive programs could help students overcome barriers and bridge the gap in achievement they face.

After-school programs have the unique ability to harness students’ time outside of school to offer them a different type of learning experience. When implemented effectively, these programs can lead to greater academic and personal success for students. After-school programs with an additional cultural focus can also support students and help them overcome barriers to success through mentorship and supplemental learning. Their programming may include special enrichment activities, like guest speakers, field trips, or workshops that cultivate community building, leadership skills, or other techniques for success. When participating in this kind of cultural-based learning community, students can build tight knit relationships with their educators and peers and to learn in an environment dedicated to empowering and supporting them. The specialized approach taken by these types of programs can have an additional positive effect on students.

## **Interview**

The purpose of this interview is to extend the exploration of this topic by introducing a personal experience and making an application to the community. After doing research on these kinds of after-school programs and tutoring at Juventud myself, I was interested to see how the interviewee’s views compared with the literature, and how the program experiences compared with those studied. In particular, I wanted to know how participating in a culturally-focused program affected the students and how they may have progressed or grown since taking part. The interview



and my analysis of it are not meant to be generalized, rather, they are a point for reflection and an opportunity to draw connections from the text to a local example of one of these programs.

### **Interview Transcription**

Edited to maintain anonymity. Italicized text was included by the interviewee post-interview.

Question: Describe your role. Do you see yourself as more of a teacher, counselor/social worker, mentor, advocate, a combination of these things, or none of these things? Explain.

Answer: In my role, I primarily focus on programming. In general, that's my main focus: writing the Juventud program. That being said, there's a lot of things that are involved in that, so part of my role is working with families as well. So, I would consider myself more of an advocate, in terms of making family connections to the school. I guess another part as well is being another adult involved, so if a student is having issues with teachers, or their parents are having issues with teachers or other staff at the school, they have somebody else to go to.

Q: What are the primary goals of Juventud? How do you work to achieve them? In your time at Juventud, have you seen these goals be or start to be achieved?

A: Juventud has been around for quite a few years now, but unfortunately, despite that time, Juventud has never really had a main set of goals, and it has never been really established officially. That's been really challenging. With that, that means that every school kind of chooses how their program is going to go and what they choose to focus on. I focus more on providing a safe space for students, as well as attempting to get their academics to be on par with their class. So, a lot of our students learn how to get their homework done when they get home and how to do their homework in Spanish. It's hard for them to get that kind of help outside of Juventud. My goal is to have their grades be at least "okay," so they feel confident going into high school and exploring whatever careers they want to explore. I don't want them to say, "oh, I can't do that because I'm terrible at math," or something like that. A lot of times the way that students view themselves, in terms of academics, is their grades. So that is my goal at Juventud.

Q: How does participating in Juventud affect students' success? Have you seen any significant grade increases or boosts in academic or social confidence in your students?

A: I have ... If they want to be there, and they are emotionally present, who will put in the effort – not all students will, and not all students can, and that's okay – I have seen *tremendous* growth. I have had students who have gone from pretty much all D's to being on the honor roll. I have had students who didn't understand how to do their arithmetic to beginning to understand fractions and decimals. They may not be perfect, but that's still a lot of growth. Every student that previously didn't have the motivation and the confidence to continue their school work has gone to now having the initiative and doing that for themselves without even being asked to do it. So, I've definitely seen a lot of growth.

Q: Is there a fee for Juventud? If so, is there a method to reduce or eliminate it? What is the process to do so?

A: Actually, for all Centro Hispano programs, there is absolutely no participation fee.

Q: How many students participate in Juventud? How is the program growing? How have you adapted to accommodate more students?

A: Last year we had around 20 students enrolled, and then towards the end of the year about 15 who would show up. This year the number of students has grown; we have 34 enrolled, and about 30 show up every day. So, we have grown, mostly because the teachers have been doing a lot of promoting to their students because previous students have benefitted a lot from the program. The way that I have been able to accommodate that growth is mostly through MSCR (Madison School & Community Recreation). They are responsible for programming in every single school, so they are already really big and they have a greater financial resource than Centro Hispano. *MSCR provides after-school snacks and transportation for students to get home if they stay for after-school programming, per the memorandum of agreement between Centro Hispano and MMSD. I think we are fortunate to have a really great MSCR director, who was kind enough to offer transportation to some field trips and an additional after-school staff person to our Juventud.* MSCR hires part-time staff for after-school programs, so they have hired one person who is able to be there twice a week at Juventud as an assistant through MSCR, and

that allows us to have just a little bit more time before school is over so that we can plan for the day.

Q: What are some of the challenges you or the program face, in your experience? How have you worked to resolve them?

A: A big one, for me, has been working without a program. Like I said, Juventud has been around for many years and despite that time, nobody has taken the initiative to develop a curriculum. Now we have a new manager at Centro Hispano who will hopefully get started on building that up, and I think because of that we have something to look forward to. Another issue is ... even when I had a group of just fifteen students, I just didn't feel like I had enough time to connect with *all of* my students. And now, I do have some help, but that's another thing we're working on at Centro Hispano, is figuring out ways that we can better serve these communities after school.

Q: Why do most students join Juventud? Do they join primarily to access academic assistance, developmentally enriching activities, child care, a combination of these things, or none of these things?

A: Well, most students, I think, join in the first place because of their parents, mostly because of the homework. But I would say most students stay enrolled in Juventud because they make friends, they like to have someplace to go after school, and they are part of a community.

Q: In your experience, what is the effect of having a dual-language community on learning and academic achievement? What is the importance of shared language skills and having a community of students who can work together?

A: I can't really speak too much on their academic achievement, because I don't know how that compares to the rest of the school and students who only take classes in English. But I definitely can tell that students in dual-language immersion programs build a community. They are all taking the same classes every single year, so it's definitely become a community for them. You know, they have lunch and recess and they have the option to sit with other kids, but they tend to sit with each other, so they definitely have a community

there. For the parents as well, they have definitely benefitted from the program. I guess I had never really seen parents connect with each other, but my parents from the program connect with each other; they're friends in a lot of cases, and they really have built a community amongst themselves. In terms of what is more important, what I think of immediately is that the students are learning Spanish. If young people don't learn Spanish, they're going to have a harder time communicating with their parents and family. It's a really sad thing to see, and I've experienced it very much in the community that I work with too, that a lot of younger generations aren't able to *really* speak with their parents and they start to lose that relationship. Fortunately, these students in Juventud aren't experiencing that because they can actually communicate in Spanish. The program has really helped them build a sort of community around that.

Q: Tell me a bit about the experience of students who do not speak English. Do they face any unique challenges? How does Juventud help to resolve those difficulties?

A: The students who don't speak any English are all newcomers. We have three of them in Juventud, at the beginning of the year for one day we had four, but now we have three. The obvious challenge is that they do not speak English and they don't understand any of their classes that are in English, but the other challenges are that they just feel disconnected. I don't know if you ever noticed that sometimes when I would speak English, students who speak only Spanish would feel left out, even though I knew they wanted to be part of it. That was the biggest thing I had to learn, that I had to speak both English and Spanish to the whole program, which was really different from last year, when all of our students spoke both English and Spanish. So that ability to engage is really, really big for non-English speakers. Also, something that I've noticed in the school is the evaluations. Because not only do they not speak English, but they're coming from another country, that things happen a little differently, or they started somewhere else and they're not where we're at, or something like that, they are having trouble adapting to school here.

Q: How are parents involved with Juventud? Do you need to make any accommodations, or advocate for parents or students in certain situations? Do you ever find yourself becoming a bridge or mediator between school and home?

A: I have two parent meetings a year, basically at the beginning of every semester, the first one is so that parents can get to know me and learn the expectations for the students and the second one is to remind them of those expectations and to get to know each other again. In terms of advocacy or connecting parents to the school, I think [my team] does a really good job of having other people there, so luckily, since they have dual-language immersive classes, the students' teachers speak Spanish. We also have a really driven BRS (Bilingual Resource Specialist). She was the BRS last year and she has a tradition of being really driven to be involved in the Latinx community, and she is a really good resource to go to. She is also really involved because she used to be the BRS at the elementary school where a lot of students came from. So, there are a lot of people that are available for parents so that we can communicate with the school. Some don't always come to me, and that's okay, as long as they go to somebody; the level of advocacy also varies a lot for each parent.

Q: What, in your opinion, have been the most influential activities held through Juventud? Any highlights, like certain field trips, presentations, or other activities? What made them important to you or the students?

A: One thing that I keep noting is about bringing students to UW. Our students are all from Madison and do not live far away from the UW campus, but many have never stepped foot on the actual campus. And that's such a big thing, because of the impact that UW has in Madison and on the community. So, last year, I took the Juventud students on a field trip to campus so that they could just hang out and do homework. I know that some of the students were nervous to be there, because people were looking at them, like "why are these little kids here?" It was definitely a new experience for them. But after that, I kept on bringing them back for other things. I took them to one of the gardens, the Allen Centennial Gardens; we went there for a field trip. There were a couple of on-campus organizations that had conferences, so I took them to that. I had a student who basically went on all those field trips, and I could tell that every time we went again and again, they just got more comfortable being there. They felt like, "oh, I've been here before," or "oh, I know where I'm going;" they felt comfortable even existing in that space, that was really big. And I had students who hadn't even considered college as a possibility for them, so that to me was one of the most impressive things. But also, I think that any field trip in general is

important; I try to take them on a lot of field trips because they can get all these different experiences and try out different environments that they feel safe in, with their classmates and Juventud, with the mentors that they know. And then they are willing to be open to new experiences after they move on from the program.

## **Analysis & Conclusions**

The interview offers deeper insight into the experiences of participants and staff of the Juventud after-school program. According to Centro Hispano of Dane County, “The Juventud Program, embedded in the MMSD middle schools, allows youth to explore their cultural identity and build self-esteem while providing one-on-one academic support.” In this environment, students have experienced notable growth and academic success. The cultural focus provides a supportive space and enriching programming for students to learn and grow. The approach gives students the freedom to explore their cultural identity and provides a community of peers, mentors, and educators to encourage them.

The Juventud program follows the model of a typical after-school program, with an additional cultural focus. Students are provided with an after-school snack, dedicated homework time, and some other activity, such as a presentation or craft. On occasion, they go on a field trip. The Juventud after-school program has obvious benefits, like tutoring and productive activities, as well as more tacit ones, like community- and relationship-building and personal growth. The program has faced some challenges, but the future is bright.

Success at Juventud is not measured only by test scores. Juventud students have access to homework help, volunteer tutors, and educational activities, but they can also gain confidence, develop leadership skills, and nurture their curiosity through the program. The goal of “providing a safe space” for students to learn and grow is intriguing. Instead of placing a heavy emphasis only on academics, she makes a point of allowing students to feel comfortable wherever they are at. This uniquely flexible approach gives students the room they need to learn at their own pace, with the goal of gaining confidence as they move forward in their academic career. Researchers such as Halpern (1999) or Lee and Hawkins (2008), suggest that a balance between academic emphasis and other developmentally enriching activities is necessary for the success of after-school programs. Lewis (2000), too, emphasizes that after-school programs are important for learning, but must not have same modality of learning as schools and should instead have a goal of long-term

development. The Juventud approach reflects this standpoint. Her students may come for help with homework, but end up reaping benefits far beyond simply passing seventh-grade math.

The program has faced some challenges. One of these is the lack of an overarching curriculum, which is similar to some of the difficulties mentioned by Halpern. Each individual coordinator of Juventud is given the agency to design the program how they see fit. In some ways, this gives coordinators more freedom to address the specific needs of students at their respective middle school locations. However, it also leads to a lack of consistency for students and puts an extra burden on coordinators. A general curriculum could help to give the program a more structured schematic of lesson plans and additional activities, which coordinators could specialize to their programs as necessary. In accordance with its mission to empower youth, strengthen families, and engage the community, Centro Hispano would have the opportunity to outline programming specially designed to empower and serve these students and their community. Another challenge has been that there are simply too many students to get to know them well on a personal level. Lee and Hawkins (2008) discussed how community- and relationship-building are key factors in these programs. The Juventud program is organized by one employee, part-time volunteers and MSCR staff. Halpern mentioned that after-school programs need to resolve the issue of staffing in order to improve.

As mentioned by Halpern, parents are less likely to enroll their children in after-school programs the more the entrance fee costs. Centro Hispano's policy of having no participation fee for their programs greatly improves accessibility. This makes programming easier to access. It also means that young people have an opportunity to improve their academics and participate in culturally enriching activities without the disincentive of participation fees.

Particularly interesting was the theme of community in the Juventud program. During the interview, it was mentioned that "students in dual-language immersion programs build a community." From the time spent together in the same classes in school, to participation in extra-curricular activities as a group, students build close relationships. Community-building goes beyond the program as well. The interviewee commented on the extent that dual-language education has affected family relationships, as young people learn their family's language and "can actually communicate in Spanish. The program has really helped them build a sort of community around that." As in the Lee and Hawkins study, a focus is placed on the students' culture, history,

and family structure to forge connections between students' home and school cultures. The social relationships formed are closer than most and create the feeling of community.

The interviewee is optimistic for the future of the Juventud program. She mentions a new manager at Centro Hispano and is hopeful that she will help to resolve challenges and develop a solid curriculum for the program. For the students, the program opens new doors that they may not have considered. They go into high school prepared and confident about their academics. In addition, the program introduces them to new experiences. The reflections on bringing students to the University of Wisconsin are indicative of the ways that students can encounter new possibilities for their future. By bringing students to campus, the Juventud program helps them feel "comfortable even existing in that space," even "students who hadn't even considered college as a possibility for them."

There remains room for future research, specifically on culturally-focused after-school programs and how they affect educational disparities. Existing literature on after-school programs primarily focuses on programs for the general population, but not programs specifically focused for marginalized groups. When examining education gaps, it is important to look not only into schools, but also the myriad areas of informal education. More research is needed, but so far culturally-focused after-school programs look like a promising option for resolving educational disparities.

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## **Impact of Pre-College Programs for Chicana Students**

Katie Danforth

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Latino civil rights organizations have long focused on education to improve their communities by making better opportunities and career prospects available to young adults. Research on higher education shows the wisdom of this approach. Education can lead to “higher lifetime earnings, more fulfilling work environment, better health, and longer life,” in addition to “participation in athletic, cultural and social events, and enhancement of social status” (Perna & Swail, 2001, p.99). In this paper I explore the challenges facing Chicana<sup>1</sup> students’ access to higher education with a focus on college preparatory programs. In order to bridge gaps in access to education, universities across the United States have created precollege programming. Unfortunately, these programs often fail Chicanas, both due to lack of funding and because staff misunderstand the challenges and expectations that these students may face due to both gender and ethnicity. To understand more about how these failures happen, I’ve chosen to interview the director of one such program, the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY). On its website, the program states that its mission includes providing an inclusive community and authentic challenge while nurturing academic talent. This is significant, as the barriers facing students are more nuanced than just financial burden, including educational aspirations, academic achievement, academic preparation, and access to information about college (Perna & Swail, 2001). The interview reflected this, as we discussed the opportunities that pre-college programs provide for students to develop skills, knowledge, confidence, aspirations, and overall preparedness for higher education.

The study of Chicana engagement in higher education must begin by examining the history of social inequality that this group faces. Many Chicanas belong to the working class, live in poor, segregated neighborhoods, and attend under-resourced schools that do not prepare them for college. Positioned at the bottom of the social ladder, they suffer concentrated racist, sexist, and classist oppression (Belkhir, Griffith, Sleeter & Allsup, 1994). As detailed by the Chicana Rights Project:

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<sup>1</sup> Much of the existing research on the topic of college preparatory programming and its impact focuses on the larger Latino block. This is also true of most statistics that are gathered on poverty, graduation rate, etc. Throughout this paper Latino and Chicana are not intended to be interchangeable. However, it is reasonable to establish connections between Chicanas, who do face obstacles specific to their nuanced identity, and the larger more studied Latinos.

The Chicana can be found in every corner of our country, but mainly she resides in large numbers in the southwestern states. The Mexican American woman exhibits consistent patterns of unemployment, low income, and little education which, in addition to her sex and national origin, lead to a crucial lack of experience in maneuvering through the channels of the American social, political, and economic system (Segura, 1993, p. 94).

This perpetuates a cycle whereby Chicanas are occupationally segregated into lower paying and lower status administrative support, clerical, and service occupations. Lack of access to education helps reproduce this inequality for future generations (Segura, 1993).

There is still much that we do not know about how college preparatory programs fit into this overall picture of inequality. The few studies available reveal that many minority students lack the money, transportation, and teacher support that they would need to take advantage of them. William Tierney (2004) studied the issue by contextualizing three student interviewees' experience, detailing the needs and educational challenges faced by students in high school intervention programs. In his research, he discovered two factors that were essential for successful college preparatory programs: recognition of the social context in which these programs are held, and extensive communication and partnership between high schools, universities, and outreach programs. Tierney also noted the value of systematic and sustained support for students. He focused specifically on three students, one of whom is Fernando, a 17-year-old who moved to California with his parents from Mexico and did not have a "green card," making financial aid for college almost impossible. Fernando performed above average in every subject that required little writing. Because of the difficulty of transitioning from Spanish to English and lack of academic support in the area, he struggled with other subjects. Additionally, when his family first came to the United States, he was shot by an unknown individual because he happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. He described feeling reluctant to share this with anyone, as he was afraid that people would perceive him as a delinquent member of a gang. Fernando felt isolated from his peers and would have benefited from interacting with a supportive network, such as a youth group, where he felt comfortable enough to share his thoughts and experiences within this context. Students like Fernando reveal how significant the social environment of college preparation programs are, and that focusing solely on the development of academic skills can actually have a negative impact. He indicated that his hesitance to share with others about the trauma he

experienced in the shooting was partially due to harmful negative stereotypes about Latinos. Being able to discuss factors outside of school that may impact academic performance as well as overall mental health is extremely important to the wellbeing of students. Tierney posits that in order to encourage the growth of academic achievement, programs that concentrate on isolated skills are less effective than systematic and structured approaches that incorporate “the cultural backgrounds of youth.” (960). This could be reflected through a program considering English as a second language to be a strength, not a deficiency. In addition, programs offering constructive spaces for students to share about their individual struggles and needs pertaining to their unique backgrounds would also prove beneficial.

Among the barriers to college access that Latinas in general face, poverty is key. Along with poverty come under-resourced and segregated elementary and secondary schools. Some 38 percent of Latinas attended high-poverty schools in 2011 compared to just 6 percent of white females (Gándara, 2015, p.10). Living in large households with few resources, Latino families’ have lower “quality of life” than some others, further dampening their college participation. In 1991, for example it was found that about 27 percent of all Latino families earned incomes below the poverty line, and 15 percent of Latino households in 1990 had six or more people (Valdez, 2001). Since then, poverty rates have declined for “all major race and Hispanic origin groups”, but those groups “continue to be over-represented in the population in poverty relative to their representation in the overall population” (Creamer, 2020). In the face of this continued inequality, voters and policy makers across the United States have moved away from redistributive policies, further complicating Chicano/Latino access to higher education and social mobility. The Labour Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) found that, “Latinas are part of the largest and fastest growing minority group in the US... [yet] earn a meagre 60 cents for every dollar earned by a white man, representing the largest wage gap of any other group of working women. More than one-third of Latinas also have less than a high-school education” (Ibarra, 2018, p. 40). Clearly the United States needs to address these educational and economic inequities in order to achieve better lives for all.

College preparatory programs can be part of the solution, but even within those programs, Latinas face inequities that require attention. As Elsa Valdez (2001) has noted, these include poverty, lower academic expectations, inferior instructors, and attending segregated schools, all of which led to greater academic risk. Valdez argues that familial support, positive mentors, and

support for personal characteristics embodied by students (such as cultural, ethnic, or racial background) offer possible remedies. Particularly, Valdez focused on the effect that parental support and socialization practices held on Latino educational achievement. Another key area is culture. A growing body of research suggests that the transition of students of color to college is enhanced when they participate in precollege outreach programs that include a focus on their culture. Perna and Swail's (2001) review of college preparation programs revealed that many programs emphasize academic preparation, but do little to integrate students' cultural identity, needs, or assets into their activities. This focus can be manifested through initiatives and opportunities for students to integrate their cultural and racial identities into academic work. Other useful practices include inclusionary discussions and having spaces where students are free to grapple with their identity and culture. Unfortunately, not all college preparation programs have taken these insights to heart.

Summer college preparatory programs that allow for engagement with universities on a direct and personal level seem to boost students' academic confidence and encourage participants to pursue postsecondary education. An article detailing the effect of having a summer internship within the Department of Chemistry at the University of Texas at El Paso found that students who had internships were more likely to later pursue a career or degree in field of their interest. The Research and Engineering Apprenticeship Program (REAP) targets students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and encourages mostly women and Hispanic students from the area to pursue careers in mathematics, science, and technology. From 2005 to 2009, the program largely attracted female and Hispanic students. Only three male students participated (Gardea, Rios, Pal, Gardea-Torresday & Narayan, 2011). Through internships with the university, the students were able to participate in research and engage in the campus lifestyle. Paired with graduate student mentors throughout the summer, participants gained a "pre-college experience" and the opportunity to envision themselves as future students.

The largest critique of pre-college programs as a way to increase the participation of Mexican American female students in higher education is that while those programs may work for individuals, they leave larger communities behind (Tierney, 2004). Clearly, the United States needs greater overall educational investment, with a particular focus on reaching those who need it most. This means directing funds for educational advancement at public schools that have lower overall testing scores, lower graduation rates, and that lack essential components of learning such

as textbooks, classroom supplies, and representative staffs. In addition, policymakers must ensure that current statistics and research support those decisions that are being made concerning funding, and that they are representative of the populations they are to serve. The work of Tierney, Valdez, and Perna and Swail, shows that there is a consensus of sorts on what is necessary to create an efficient and successful program. Such programs must incorporate the cultural lives of students in their learning environments, proceed according to a longitudinal design, and build networks of educational actors to increase accessibility and overall effectiveness. In this way, programs may be able to improve themselves and serve low-income, minority youth better. One such program is found in the Wisconsin Center for Academically Talented Youth (WCATY) which hosts several programs for young students to take part in throughout the academic year and the summer.

I chose to interview an employee of WCATY due to her long-standing position with WCATY which has allowed her to watch the program evolve through the years, giving her a unique and expansive knowledge of the issues that students face when approaching college. The topic covered throughout this interview pertained to the programs that WCATY offers and how they act to serve low-income, minority populations, and more specifically Chicana students. In particular, the effectiveness of these programs, as well as the challenges that face students who attend them were considered regarding the interviewees experience in addressing them with position of leadership in a college preparatory program.

## **Interview**

I began my interview with Sarah Jones (pseudonym), an employee of WCATY, by asking about the program's goal and target demographic. She described the organization as, "Several programs combined under one idea to serve people who are ready for more challenge outside of what is already available. To identify those areas in which we can serve and how we can make that accessible to a larger group of individuals." Asked how the program made sure that it was available to students from a broad range of backgrounds, particularly Chicana students, Jones commented that,

Accessibility too is a big aspect, it is not always the case that people who actually have a lot of that potential would have already demonstrated that performance, sometimes it may look the opposite. Even if you were trying to self-motivate to learn, if you were



discouraged by school, it may result in problematic behaviors or disengagement which would be an obstacle for adults to nominate students. For example, if right now you're not an above and beyond perfect student and someone else displays all of these positive characteristics, you may be overlooked. It is important to make sure that it's not just students or their parents who nominate, but their teachers who recognize and understand these signs.

She also noted that administrators needed to work alongside those teachers who nominate students in order to reach potentially underrepresented populations and acknowledged that teacher biases, along with biases built into traditional definitions of "advanced learners" in the United States, may harm immigrant students or students for whom English is a second language. She provided the example of someone who has an accent, or who is learning the English language who might be perceived as "behind" their peers. "A lot of times," she remarked, "people see it as you need to have special services available to them in order to learn English, where other individuals aren't thinking about the fact that these students may be on their second or third language, and are not only good at languages, but are potentially talented at that to begin with." She cites students who may have immigrated to the United States, and yet after a few years are not only getting good grades but excelling. At the same time, the first thing many individuals notice is this "superficial, okay there is an accent, so I guess they're not as good as some of my other kids in the class...yet this should be regarded as a strength rather than some deficiency." This is a significant point to note, particularly as half of all Latinas will enter K-12 school speaking Spanish as their first language, resulting in their placement into remedial classes that track them into lower-level curricula and slow their academic process (Gándara, 2015, p.9). Without being provided with adequate resources and support, Latinas who are English learners lag behind English-speaking peers in both English proficiency and academic content at every stage of the educational system.

We then turned to the question of how to recruit students and how they worked to make the program accessible and welcome to all. She started by highlighting the importance of affordability, and further than that, general accessibility. "In order to increase the access to the program, which is one of the cornerstones of WCATY," she maintained, "whether or not you can afford to attend should not be something that is hindering potential applicants. Which is why WCATY does a lot of fundraising and actively works to receive grants as well." They provide scholarships for 20-25% of

children attending the camp in order to give children the opportunity to attend, even if their family cannot afford the steep price. She then touched on the more socially implicated aspect of encouraging accessibility which involves communicating to students and parents the message that, “you can come and are welcome.” This subject seemed to be especially important to her, as she grew more passionate in her speech and demeanor as she spoke about this barrier. Throughout the interview, she stressed the importance of financial support and connected it to students’ feelings of belonging. WCATY also partners with other programs through which they offer access to their programming to homeless families or those who do not have the financial means to support their children’s interest. They have programs for both parents and children and streamline the application process for those in need. Staff may directly help applicants with paperwork if the applicants lack computers or cannot speak or write English.

Next, I asked a question concerning which specific ways the program is meant to prepare students to apply for or attend college. She clarified that WCATY’s overarching goal includes encouraging and following the academic ventures a student takes from middle school throughout high school, while challenging them in ways that go beyond what they experience during a typical school year. Clearly, the main objective of the program is to challenge academically talented students and prepare them to see the UW-Madison campus as somewhere they belong. This can be especially meaningful for potential first-generation college students. It makes the experience of being on campus more familiar earlier on, allowing for college to become a tangible goal for the future. Studying college level material while in high school encourages them by showing them that they can handle the course load. At the same time, students have the option to either get high school credit for the grade they receive, or to leave it off their record, making the program less of a risk. Ms. Jones believes that this encourages students to take more Advanced Placement (AP) credit courses later, which is useful when applying to college. Additionally, the program can prove beneficial for students who do not have access to certain classes that focus on areas such as biotechnology or engineering at their school. This advantage can manifest itself if, for instance, this later encourages them to pursue a degree in a related field that they otherwise would not have considered. “How would you know that you like it,” she asked, “if you don’t have the chance to experience it?” This early exposure is crucial as it gives students the opportunity to experiment with their interests before investing in them.

I asked whether Ms. Jones had evidence that participation in the program makes it more likely for students to attend college, particularly for potential first-generation students. She responded with a few anecdotes. Walking on campus, she often encounters current college students who used to attend WCATY, and that she has met employees on the UW-Campus who were former students. She mentioned the progression to college is largely aided by the emotional connections, memories, and relationships that are built from attending the program. It is through these experiences that students begin to believe they can belong on campus as well, particularly if they are potential first-generation college students. The Latinos in Higher Education report from 2019 revealed that “Latinos were much more likely to be first-generation college students than other racial/ethnic groups”, with 44% of Latinos being the first in their family to attend college (Excelencia In Education, 2019, p.6). This could imply that programs such as WCATY can have a lasting effect on these students. Another interesting statistic provided by Excelencia In Education showed that Latino students were less likely to pursue STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics) fields at around 16%. Ms. Jones noted that students have come back and relayed their experiences to her, saying that it was at WCATY where they first felt a spark of interest in the field they later pursued. They tended to mention that they had been more willing to try new things and subjects that they otherwise would not have attempted out of fear of failure or a poor academic mark.

By providing an environment and experience through which students are able to find a sense of belonging and envision themselves as future undergraduate students, WCATY is, at the very least, on the track to success according to Tierney’s (2004) evaluation of preparatory college programming. At the heart of the program, there is immense devotion in encouraging academic achievement as well as heightening self-confidence in students who attend. The courses they take are meant to challenge them, but also show them that they are more than capable of this level of academic rigor. As the interviewee stated, WCATY collaborates with schools throughout Wisconsin in order to achieve a widespread line of communication and provide knowledge about the program. Of course, this does not mean that students from other states or countries do not attend, but the primary target of the program is Wisconsin residents.

I continued by asking how the presence of international students contributes to the culture and atmosphere of WCATY. Additionally, I inquired whether there are opportunities for focus on students’ unique backgrounds, as research has suggested that this greatly benefits students of color.

She mentioned that there are several opportunities for students to engage with one-another and learn more about their various cultures through group activities facilitated by either students themselves or residential assistants (RA). The content of these events may differ depending on what the RA is passionate about and what students have expressed an interest in. For instance, there was an activity that was focused on learning phrases from languages around the world as well as a historical context for the region in which that language originated from. This process of developing activities and how subjective the content can be depending on the individual running it stresses the importance of having a diverse staff once again.

The program collaborates with several schools internationally, the largest being the Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), which brings around 20 students each year. Her response indicated that as certain areas of Wisconsin are not particularly diverse, even mixing students from more rural areas with those from cities such as Milwaukee can be a large change for some. However, a lot of what students said they valued the most from attending the camp was the ability to interact with and engage in a cultural exchange with other individuals from a vast variety of backgrounds. She noted that through WCATY's partnership with multicultural programs in the past summer, they have begun to draw in a new population eager to apply for the next year. This was good news to her, as it could assist in expanding the demographic of the camp and give students from communities that were more disadvantaged the chance to participate.

My final question pertained to challenges that students of color tend to face in their journey to attend college, with a particular focus on the experience of Chicana students. Ms. Jones emphasized the importance of the feeling of belonging that programs such as WCATY can provide students. She also touched on the significance of having role models that are similar to students in cultural and ethnic identity and noted that they attempt to hire a representative staff, both in instructional and residential employees, in order to provide this. Perhaps because the program has not emphasized working with Chicana students specifically, Ms. Jones tended to answer questions about Chicanas with more generalized responses that drew emphasis away from specific student identities.

## **Interview Analysis**

Throughout the interview, Ms. Jones touched on almost all the pertinent issues that had originally been drafted into questions. At the end of the interview, she shared with me a copy of

the WCATY post program report from 2019 in order to provide more comprehensive data on program. As might be expected, she knew a lot about the area of college preparatory programs and proved to be an extremely valuable source in this research. She admitted that currently WCATY currently has no way to quantify its “success,” or the rate at which students who participated go onward to attend college. However, they have been looking into finding a way to draft these figures. Particularly, they have been reaching out to UW-Madison alumni who attended the program, with a considerable success, and finding former-students at several levels throughout the university. Another tool they use to assess the overall success of the program during a given year is by handing out evaluations to each of the students, where they are able to reflect on their experience through an anonymous survey.

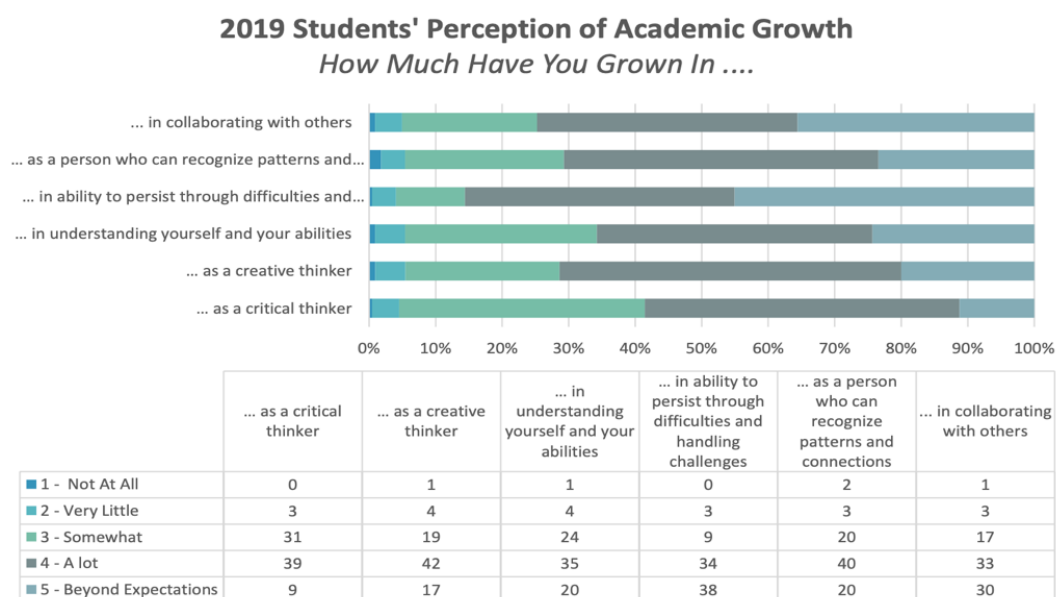
Student Growth:	All Students	Data From:
Students enjoyed participating in this opportunity.	4.7	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Students made significant progress towards their goals.	4.3	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Students enjoyed being in an academically challenging environment.	4.5	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Students put their best effort into the class.	4.6	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Students became more knowledgeable in the subject matter.	4.6	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Students made new friends at the program.	4.6	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Students are more confident in their ability to handle challenging academic tasks.	4.2	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Students felt proud to be a part of WCATY.	4.6	ALP, STEP Only
Students think that this program provided a unique learning opportunity.	4.5	ALP, STEP, YSSP, PACE
Participation in this program helped students manage their time better.	3.9	ALP, STEP Only
Students value the social aspect of camp as much as the academic.	4.4	ALP, STEP Only
Participation in this program helped students prepare for college life.	4.3	ALP, STEP Only

1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree 4= Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Survey Respondents: 368 Number of Classes: 33

These surveys are useful, as the anonymity leaves students feeling that they can be more candid with their responses, giving constructive criticism to the overall effectiveness and usefulness of the program. Although the numbers reflect a high level of satisfaction with the programs, it is disappointing not to see concrete data on what students tend to do after graduating from high school. As challenging accelerated learners and as a result preparing them for college is one of the major goals of the program, it would be helpful to know if that objective is achieved. This is a major criticism that most “early intervention” programs face, as there are typically few evaluations that investigate program impact with rigorous research methodologies, such as a control group (Tierney, 2004). However, this is not the only goal of the program, which stresses the importance of offering a challenging curriculum for students with enriched and accelerated learning

opportunities. Additionally, students self-reported on their academic growth throughout the program which revealed an apparent development in various areas, all of which are fundamental for students who are in the midst of constructing a skill set that will assist them in further academic endeavors as well as the rest of their life.



This positive response from students (once again done anonymously) could indicate a growth in confidence as well. One student from the post program report revealed that they felt more certain in their abilities, intelligence, and overall that they could accomplish the goals they set forward, such as attending their dream university.

One difficulty I faced in the interview was getting answers to questions focused specifically on Chicana students. Nevertheless, the interviewee's responses were still helpful as comprehensive insight into the effectiveness of college preparatory programs. The comments she made concerning the application process of the program, and how many times simply the accent of a student could affect whether or not they would be considered as a candidate to be nominated was insightful, and important for someone in her position to recognize and remain aware of. As previously noted in the research conducted by Valdez and Tierney, the exclusion of cultural practices and language can be extremely detrimental to Latino students' educational achievement by discouraging them from trying, alienating them, and lessening academic expectations from teachers. I found myself wishing Ms. Jones could offer more concrete examples of current or planned practices that offer cultural integration within the program. The lack of such specific examples may result from her

position as director. In this capacity, she is responsible for overseeing programming, rather than implementing it at the ground level.

Ms. Jones did touch on how effective mentoring could be achieved by having a diverse instructional and residential staff. Perna and Swail (2001) note that isolation can play a significant role in shaping the educational outcomes of Chicanos. For these researchers, isolation can result in Chicanos being concentrated in remedial programs and low-income minority schools with low levels of educational achievement. In reference to the importance of mentors, it is suggested that the retention of Chicano students is dependent on whether the institution provides Chicano faculty who can serve as role models. Whether this is due to students struggling to emulate mentors who do not match their cultural background, or because their mentors treat them with empathy, respect, and understanding is not clear, the mentoring role of Chicano and Chicana faculty is imperative. She acknowledged that while Wisconsin's lack of diversity can make it difficult to find and hire a staff that is more representative of several demographics, the program does make an effort to cultivate a workforce that can draw on various experiences, cultures, and ethnic backgrounds. However, issues such as needing to hire a residential staff for their summer programs can take priority over selecting a candidate with their background (cultural identity, race, etc.) in mind due to necessity. This problem is commonplace with the residential staff of summer programming, as staff members tend to be college students with a high turnover rate. However, this is less excusable with the teaching positions, as they are meant to be filled much earlier in the year since the educators have to create an outline of the course planning what is going to be taught beforehand. Within WCATY, there does tend to be a more diverse educational staff, particularly instructors, but at the same time, the "educational assistants" who function as teaching assistants alongside the instructors tend to be young, white college students.

Another major issue addressed was that of accessibility, and how important that can be for disadvantaged families or communities. Ms. Jones provided a copy of the WCATY Post-Program Report from 2019 which revealed that out of 567 students who participated in one of the WCATY programs, 124 students (22%) received financial aid, with a total of \$171,590 in allocated scholarships. As the program continues to grow in numbers, the amount of money allotted in the grant WCATY receives annually similarly increases. Many times, these scholarships are in full, meaning that they completely cover the cost of the program for families, whereas others are only partial scholarships that help to lessen the burden. Often, whether a family is eligible to receive

that scholarship depends on their financial need (similar to how money is granted to students through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)). It is encouraging to see the number of students who can receive financial aid growing, however this largely depends on funding and how much grant money is allocated to the program. Ms. Jones acknowledged that a recent decline in granting budgets and overall educational investment has made it particularly difficult to obtain the funds that the program has previously relied on and seek new sources of support. This speaks to larger issues than what the interviewee can necessarily take on in her position, but it reflects on the decisions being made by local, state, and federal policymakers to place less importance on the educational system.

A reoccurring issue both throughout the interview and during the research process, was that Chicana students tend to be solely mentioned in the context of a broader generalization of Latino students rather than receiving attention to their specific cultural and gendered context. There simply is a shortage of current research that has been conducted specifically on the topic of Chicana students and pre-college programming. That being said, there was an article that touched on some of the barriers to higher education that were culturally significant. One of the factors that isn't always considered as a deterrent is family support, or a lack thereof. Particularly for Chicana students who may face pressure to attend a school that is close to their family, while remaining available to assist within the home while pursuing an undergraduate degree. As Segura & Pierce (1993) recognized, community and the concept of a cohesive, intergenerational family can be essential to the cultural identity of students, especially as gender roles are reinforced and policed. They noted that mothers tend to be responsible for "teaching their daughters how to be Chicanas knowledgeable in cultural traditions and behaviors that signal their gender and ethnicity." (p.77). For those who grow up in households that hold traditional expectations, some may continue to uphold those ideals that expect women to fulfill their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers. However, it is more often the case that Latinas receive messages that are simultaneously gendered while promoting independence. Espino (2016) revealed that while parents and families may support the pursuit of an undergraduate degree, they simultaneously encouraged female heteronormative social roles, emphasizing the importance of their role as daughter, mother, and wife. This phenomenon is quite common, where women are expected to fulfill the role of "homemaker" while also knowing how to be self-sufficient. Instead of conforming to this ideology, women are increasingly challenging these concepts and taking on more independent



roles. Vasquez (2014) found that when Latinas in her study reflected on unsupportive experiences they had with their families, it led them to create visions for what their future daughters could accomplish.

These nuanced expectations can have a tremendous influence on students, with the potential to discourage some from attending college or postpone their college plans. Statistics from Excelencia in Education (2019) seem to suggest this as well, with most Latino students (81%) living off campus and with their parents. Many college preparatory programs do incorporate some level of isolation from the participant's family, as they tend to occur on campus at universities and be residential in nature. Martinez (2013) suggested that providing families with specific knowledge about college encouraged them to become more open to choices that would involve attending college away from home, thus increasing the options students had in making those decisions. Perhaps pre-college programs could attract families that would have been reluctant to participate otherwise by offering some form of online instruction. Another alternative may be to hire a culturally competent staff for recruitment that are able to effectively persuade Latino families to allow their children to spend time on campus.

It became clear throughout the preparation for this paper that there is a lack of up-to-date research focused on Chicanas as a specific sub-group, let alone in the area of pre-college programming and higher education. Even the larger Latina base isn't being appreciated as a separate entity from the larger Latino category that is often utilized in the media. Failure to take gendered differences into account in the context of pre-college programming and its overall "success" seems irresponsible, as there are clear cultural and gendered expectations placed upon individuals that can greatly influence decisions about higher education. If further research were to be conducted on the specific experience of female Mexican American students in school, it would be beneficial to interview students from various school districts. Research on the efficacy of college preparatory programs tends not to offer students themselves the chance to voice their own experiences and opinions. Policymakers are then faced with research that often oversimplifies and generalizes the specific sub-group of Chicana as falling under the broad category of Latino. While there are similarities and overlaps between the cultural and lived experiences of these groups, they are not the same. By assuming that the issues facing the larger Latino population are exactly the same that Chicanas face, they are failing to recognize the difficulties that uniquely affect Chicanas and thus preventing meaningful change that will benefit them. In fact, there is no definite way of

assuring that what the students themselves know they need will be provided unless they are asked and given a chance to share their own stories. Perhaps they would have their own suggestions as to how these programs can meet their needs and desires, which are, after all, meant to provide academic challenge and further support students in their endeavor to transition to college.

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# **The Presentations of Authenticity in the Context of Mexican Restaurants**

Gabby Marulando

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## **Literature Review**

Whether it be tortillas, enchiladas, tamales or tacos, Mexican food has become a key aspect of the American dining experience. Americans' desire to depart from the generic and seek out an authentically foreign dining experience has supported the influx of Mexican restaurants over the years. But what exactly constitutes an 'authentic' Mexican dining experience? In this paper I examine how the presentation of authenticity plays a role in the context of Mexican restaurants in the United States by focusing on the analytical relationship linking ethnic foods and a consumer base that desires an 'authentic' meal, the relationship between business and aesthetics, and the famous 'farm to fork agenda.'

## **Findings**

The global exchange of foods, as well as other cultural products has presented the consumer base with the opportunity to experience ethnic culture and food in the safety of their own community. Such a manifestation of globalization represents a capitalist consumer culture where much like clothing, music, and film, food represents an opportunity to consume an identity in an increasingly generic world. This is where consumerism, the accessibility of culture to all, and modern immigration to the United States intersect, thus creating what is known as the paradox of authenticity (Christ 2015). Authenticity is not an objective criterion, but rather one that is socially constructed and linked to certain expectations. Essentially, something is only considered authentic if it fits within the bounds of an ethnic group's definition of tradition and culture (Christ 2015).

In order to gain insight on the processes of negotiation that constitute for an 'authentic' dining experience for a consumer base, it is essential to understand what exactly makes patrons—immigrants and Americans alike—desire an explicitly authentic meal. For immigrants, what drives the popularity of ethnic foods and foodways is their desire to feel as though they are in their location of origin. Essentially, they long for foods that are reminiscent of their sending country and create cultural experiences from "back home" (Pilcher 2012, p. 443). For the mainstream U.S consumer base however, the needs are significantly different. The popularity of ethnic cuisine can be explained through the concept of "culinary tourism" in which patrons use food as a means to satisfy their desire to seek out an 'exotic' and 'foreign experience' that allows them to depart from

the generic (Long 2010.) Although patrons desire an exotic meal, however, they do not want to venture too far outside of their comfort zone, which ultimately impacts how restaurants create their meals.

In order to appeal to an American consumer base that is outside of the ethnic group, restaurant owners must create meals that are discernible from mainstream cuisine, yet able to be integrated into an edible creation- essentially situated to seem simultaneously exotic yet familiar (Finkelstein 1989). To do this, restaurants use strategies that allow clients to believe that they have had an “exotic encounter” yet keep their experience within their boundaries of cultural expectations. Alejandra Hernandez’ story perfectly represents this phenomenon. Hernandez has a truck named San Luis Viejo that is parked within a black community. This community mainly ordered items such as grilled chicken, fried fish, and pork chops because they did not understand what other menu items like “chorizo” and “chicharrones” were. Alejandra had to modify her menu to focus on flavors that were a bit more familiar to the community’s palate. The dishes she offered are not what you would necessarily consider traditional foods that represent San Luis Potosí (Lemon 2019, p. 162). For example, grilled chicken and rice could also easily be considered American as well. Hernandez and researchers alike, however, believe that although their culture is in a sense being altered, they are still educating their clients to understand their culture.

To appeal to a consumer base within the ethnic group, in this instance Mexican immigrants, Mexican restaurant owners want to most closely resemble what Mexico is like to make patrons feel culturally connected. Here, authenticity involves making residents from their location of origin feel at home. Juan Soto Cabrera, the owner of the Los Chilango's truck does just this. In Mexico City, the names and combinations of tortas are constantly changing; Cabrera modifies his menu accordingly for the sole purpose of reflecting the city’s culinary changes to make his customers feel culturally connected to Mexico City. Owners like Juan emphasize that people from Mexico City, who now reside in Columbus, want to feel like they are still at home even though they are 2,000 miles removed. They can maintain this connection by trying a flavor combination that has recently become popular in Mexico City, right in Cabrera’s truck in Columbus (152). This is what creates a sense of authenticity.

How food tastes, however, is just one factor contributing to a patron’s dining experience. Who serves the food, who cooks the food, and what interpretations the restaurant climate generates in patrons are also central to claims of authenticity (Frazier, Gelman, Wilson, and Hood 2009;

Carroll and Wheaton 2009). Lisa and Luis Gutiérrez are a mixed-race couple who own a traditional taco truck, Dos Hermanos. Lisa is a black woman from Boston, and her husband is from Benito Juárez, Oaxaca. Lisa works the truck during the day in the city center and her husband operates the truck at night for their Mexican clientele. Lisa confided that being a black woman operating a traditional taco truck actually deters Mexicans from eating at her establishment: “I would see Mexicans pull up and see me at the window, and they would drive away. Perhaps they thought that a black woman operating a truck meant that the food was not truly Mexican. And being authentic is very important to our operation.” Their experience shows that race and ethnicity contribute to the ways in which patrons perceive the authenticity of food practices. Since authenticity is a contested category, the power to create it relies on staff and patron collaboration to reach agreement on authentic claims. Jimena, owner of “La Llorona” Mexican restaurant states that her cooks from different areas of Mexico each think that food should be cooked in a different way. Despite this challenge, they must all agree to cook the food in one specific way for the purpose of pleasing her customers. The last thing she would want is one of her patrons getting mad when they order something they like, only to have it taste completely different (Lemon 2019). In this case, the presentation of authentic Mexican food is completely based on the cook for the day.

Aesthetics are another integral component in maintaining the illusion of authenticity in a restaurant's social environment. Although non-Mexican customers have a lack of experience with Mexican material culture, when they enter a Mexican restaurant, they have well-established expectations of what Mexican culture and restaurants are. In order to keep these customers returning, restaurant owners must accept these expectations and to some extent even exploit them by reducing authentic representations to stereotypical images commonly associated with Mexico in U.S. popular culture. Images and figures of tequila bottles, cacti, and various musical instruments are consciously strategized decorations that dominate the aesthetic terrain of the restaurants (Christ 2015). These surface level connections to Mexican culture satisfy an expectation of non-Mexican patrons and cultivate the feeling of an exotic environment.

Authenticity is also embodied by forming a sense of “place through taste.” The connection between a food and a specific place is central to determining a food’s authenticity. If you are not physically where the food is produced, you feel withdrawn from the place and the food doesn’t taste that good. But, if you’re eating food in the region from which it was produced, then the embodiment of the location is complete. Therefore the “farm to fork agenda” in which produce is

purchased directly from the farmer is so important. In the United States, the term and concept have grown in popularity along with the “slow food” movement (Johnston and Bauman 2010.)

It is clear that the needs of a consumer base have the utmost impact on how restaurants create their meals, but the dialectic relationship linking ethnic foods with an American consumer base that desires an authentic meal becomes complicated by the nature of business. Ultimately, a restaurant is a business, and a business owner’s main goal is to make maximum profit with minimum expenses which at times comes at the cost of a meal’s authenticity. A recent immigrant from Mexico and manager of a large Mexican restaurant highlights the difficulty of delivering authenticity through the “farm to fork agenda.” He repeatedly tells his boss how important it is to buy food directly from the farmers in Mexico, only to be shut down every time because it is simply too expensive (Lemon 2019). This manifests in the form of restaurants buying U.S. bulk packaged foods which cost less than fresh or imported alternatives from Mexico. Given the minimum exposure to Mexican foods and recipes, most Mexican restaurant goers are oblivious to the inauthentic elements used to prepare their meals.

### **Debates/Unanswered Questions**

In the case of Alejandra Fernandez, owner of the San Luis Viejo food truck, her consumer base consisted primarily of African American individuals, which meant that a lot of her menu items had to be “Americanized” to fit their palate. This is where the debate over what the Americanization of certain meals plays on the role of authenticity in restaurants. Alejandra believes that the changes to her menu, although “Americanized” did not mean they were any less Mexican. She exclaimed, “There are special seasonings in my cooking that make it Mexican, because the marinade I use is passed down from my father’s side for generations.” For her, authenticity is embedded in not the outcome of the meal itself but rather the ingredients. She states that “the food has to be fresh. You have to use fresh ingredients and know how to prepare them by hand in the kitchen... I want people to enjoy the way I make food and to know that I represent my country, my state, and my city, San Luis Potosí. I want people to eat my food and love it because that is who I am, and that’s what makes Mexican food Mexican.” Essentially to her, she could modify her menu to fit within the social frame- work of the black community and yet still consider her cuisine Mexican. It was her passion for cooking and the community that made her food truly Mexican.

Researchers Lu, Shun, and Fine however, argue quite the opposite. These scholars argue that authentic food implies that products are prepared using the same ingredients and processes as found in the homeland of the ethnic, national, or regional group. Americanized ethnic foods suggests that the local and traditional characteristics of the dish as indigenously prepared have been modified or transformed. In this “moral” sense, the food does not deserve the label of being “authentic.” With so many different perspectives and points of view, it is difficult to assess which one is correct. Who is to say what is authentic in the first place? Preferences evolve over time meaning that food must do so as well. With this in mind, how valid is it to make such a rigid statement as researchers Lu, Shun and Fine (1995) did? Given the fact that a restaurant is only as authentic as profits allow, how do business owners that value authenticity but don’t have enough funds to purchase the ingredients go about making decisions? Do they lean towards their moral sense and purchase the ingredients despite the fact that their profits and expenses are not lining up? Or, do they lean towards their strictly business mindset and purchase what they can afford: U.S bulked packaged foods, in hopes that their customers won’t notice?

In developing a more thorough understanding of the multitude and complexity of factors that contribute to authenticity, there still remains a lot of grey area that is really due to subjective interpretation. As in the case of Mexican restaurants in this research, there is no single fine line that marks the difference between what constitutes for “authentic” and “non-authentic” foods. With this “grey area,” the question we must still ask ourselves is, from using U.S bulked packaged foods, to “Americanizing” meals to fit a consumers’ palate, to exploiting inaccurate depictions of Mexican culture for the purpose of satisfying the expectations of non-Mexican patrons, how much change in a cultural tradition is possible before we claim the cultural tradition no longer characterizes the ethnic group from which it is supposedly derived?

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**Las Pachucas:**  
**Female Mexican American Empowerment through Cultural Consciousness**  
Madeline Walaszek

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Las Pachucas, Mexican American young women of the 1940s, became highly controversial but were also admired and emulated for their flamboyant fashions that often included zoot suit jackets, pants or short skirts, tall hairstyles and dramatic makeup (See figures 1 and 2). Pachucas were quickly condemned as sexually loose for their defiance of gender norms and were stigmatized as dangerous gang members rumored to hide weapons in their elaborate hairstyles (Ruiz 1998, p. 146). Pachucas and Pachucos (the male counterparts of Pachucas) received national attention during two key events in the 1940s - the Sleepy Lagoon case and the Zoot Suit Riots, incidents that highlighted the ways in which non-white youth culture was criminalized in American society (Ramírez 2009, p. 28). The moral hysteria surrounding Pachuquismo (the name for the subculture that Pachucas were part of) occurred within the context of social change caused by WWII which heightened anxieties about the breakdown of “traditional society”. Additionally, during this period the US actively suppressed class and race consciousness amongst non-white Americans and criminalized non-white youth culture, thus creating an atmosphere that stigmatized the Pachuca identity as seen clearly in both the Sleepy Lagoon case and the Zoot Suit Riots. Las Pachucas were a threat to United States wartime society in that they rejected white “respectable” social and beauty norms and did not conform to white middle class ideas about gender expression, refusing to be passive about their mistreatment in American society. But the Pachuca identity and what it meant to individuals was far more complicated than the media portrayal of Pachucas as troublesome and potentially dangerous. Although not all women who wore styles attributed to Pachucas self-identified as such, by incorporating elements of Pachuca culture into their fashion, they could use it to send a message. I propose that whether young women identified as Pachucas, the Pachuca style and identity was a way in which they could assert their independence, individuality and discontent with second-class citizenship as Mexican Americans

World War II contributed to newfound independence that women gained through their entry into the workforce, and the rapidly changing gender roles created familial and societal tension which resulted in the scapegoating of figures like Pachucas, who pushed the limits for “acceptable” forms of femininity (p. 69). Vicki Ruiz explains in *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-century America*, young Mexican American working women were

often vital in bringing in money for their family, and thus wielded economic power. Rather than risk losing a daughter's contribution to the household income, parents had to accept when daughters chose to spend some of their income freely and could no longer as easily dictate their social lives (Ruiz 1998, p. 121). The increased control women had over their lives—not just among Mexican Americans but among all groups in the US—resulted in anxieties about women's sexuality and created a moral panic. Fears about traditional family structures being undermined plagued many communities, but American society targeted Pachucas in particular. Changing gender norms created tension in some Mexican American households in which immigrant parents and their American raised children clashed not only over generational differences but also over cultural differences (Ramírez 2009, p. 18). The idea that Pachucas were sexually loose permeated Mexican American and white communities alike, fueled by their untraditional fashion styles as well as the independence associated with Pachuca culture. In the Spanish language newspaper of Los Angeles *La Opinión*, Pachucas were referred to as Malinches<sup>2</sup>, a term which condemned them not only as betraying their community by not conforming to Mexican culture but also insinuated that they used their sexuality in a sinister way. The media characterized Pachucas as having loose morals that threatened gender and sexuality norms of the time. As the *Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express* decried, “[a] gang girl gives herself freely, if she likes the boy. If she doesn't she knifes him or has other girls in her gang attack him” (Escobedo 2013, p. 29). This portrayal of “morally corrupt behavior” actually reflects a way in which some women had agency over their sexuality. Thus, the Pachuca identity empowered people during a time when society exerted a great deal of control over the lives of young women.

Pachuca *style* was significant because it represented a rejection of white middle class social and beauty norms and for this reason mainstream society deemed the style unacceptable. The Pachuca style was seen as an exaggeration of mainstream trends in femininity and contrasted with the imagery of white middle class femininity frequently depicted in war effort propaganda (Ramírez 2009, p. 69). As Diana Cabral examines in *Fashion Aesthetics: The Legacy of Chicana Fashion on Identity Development*, the media frequently condemned the Pachuca style and identity,

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<sup>2</sup> Also known as Malitzin or Doña Marina, La Malinche was an Aztec woman alive during the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs in what is now Mexico. As the translator, guide, and mother of the child of conquistador Hernán Cortés (although whether or not this relationship was consensual is scrutinized), she has been popularly depicted as a traitor in Mexican history (Mohammed, “Who Was La Malinche?”). Her complex role means she continues to be a controversial figure, but in this context the term La Malinche is used as an insult to the Pachucas.

characterizing it as “trashy” and indicative of lower socioeconomic status (Cabral 2014, p. 48). At the time, as Vicki Ruiz explains, the beauty industry targeted Mexican American women and pushed white standards of beauty (including skin lighteners). Pachuca style used this makeup but rejected the subtle “modest” styles of the time, instead choosing to use bright lipstick on heavily lined lips, drawn on dramatic eyebrows, and intricately sculpted tall hairstyles (Ramírez 2009, p. xii). Extravagant Pachuca style was empowering, because it gave young Mexican Americans pride in their appearance and dismissed the idea that femininity had to fall in line with white middle class norms. While contemporary critics of Pachuca fashion saw this as flashy and undignified, women wearing Pachuca fashion in photographs exhibited pride in their style. Figure 3 features a young woman named Jennie Ontiveras dressing in the style associated with Pachuquismo, including trousers tapered at the ankle, a zoot suit style jacket and a teased hairstyle. By choosing to wear this style in a formal photograph, Ontiveras conveys pride in wearing Pachuca style clothing. Ontiveras then sent this photograph to her cousin Frances, showing that she intentionally chose to present herself to others in Pachuca style. One can also interpret Ontiveras’s stance—standing tall and looking directly at the camera—as exemplifying confidence and independence. Of course, what this style meant to Ontiveras cannot be completely understood just by looking at a photograph, and undoubtedly like other young women at the time, the motivations behind her fashion decisions were likely complex. Nonetheless the adoption of the Pachuc@ look for a formal photograph shows a value for the style. While Pachuca fashion and culture was disparaged by white America and older generations within the Mexican American community, many continued to evoke the style, as it presented an opportunity to push back against restrictive beauty standards and social norms.

A dimension of Pachuquismo less frequently discussed but still valuable in understanding the complexity and importance of the identity is the influence of indigenous culture. Aspects of Pachuc@ culture (as well as more modern subcultures such as Chol@) demonstrated pride in mestiz@ identity and often incorporated indigenous symbolism. For example, in *Pachucas and Pachucos in Tucson: Situated Border Lives*, Cummings explains that early incarnations of Pachuc@ language (known as “caló”) was spoken by indigenous populations like the Yaqui, and Yaqui symbolism may have contributed to Pachuc@ style. Notably, the author observed that the cross symbols on Yaqui masks were also tattooed on the faces of early Pachuc@s (Cummings 2009, p. 17). Diana Cabral also asserts that an important part of Chicanx fashion is the

incorporation of Mesoamerican symbolism, explaining that religious and indigenous symbols like the heart are often seen in modern Chicanx styles (Cabral 2014, p. 109). The word “Chol@” in fact came from the Spanish caste system and was often used in a derogatory manner towards mixed raced people (Cummings 2009, p. xx). Mexican American youth reclaimed this term in the late 20th century and researchers such as Cummings argue that Chol@ style was influenced by indigenous symbolism and fashion. Chol@s, like Pachuc@s, experienced criminalization in American society, and discriminatory law enforcement targeted Mexican American teens for being part of Chol@ culture. By looking at the link between indigenous identity and Mexican American youth culture, the story and motivations behind the styles become even more complex.

The Pachuca identity became highly controversial because a key part of Pachuquismo was the rejection of second-class citizenship and the refusal to conform to a society that discriminated against Mexican Americans. While some Mexican American women could pass as white and chose to do so, Pachuca identity was based on a refusal of absolute assimilation, as white society had devalued Mexican American youth. Diana Cabral argues convincingly that a foundation of Pachuca culture was the rejection of the acceptable forms of femininity at the time, which she defines as the V-Girl, the Feminine Patriot, and the Female Laborer (Cabral 2014, p. 52). Mexican American teens may have felt a desire to not conform to these identities and rather create a truly Mexican American identity. White society pointed to a lack of assimilation as the cause of Pachuca identity, while Mexican American parents blamed Pachuquismo on the over-Americanization of teens and rejection of Mexican cultural values (Escobedo 2013, p. 33).

In reality, Pachuc@ identity was a result of the unique Mexican American teen experience and cannot be understood as too American or too Mexican. Pachuc@ style embodied class and race consciousness and unified young Mexican Americans and as a result, the criminalization of Pachuc@ culture became even more widespread in the context of the U.S.'s assimilationist agenda during WWII. For example, as Escobedo notes in *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: the Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front*, officers in youth reform centers saw Pachuca women as causing trouble and creating racial tension, but the women were only “causing trouble” by refusing to submit to discrimination. Their insistence on wearing Pachuca style in reform schools defined them as Mexican American and highlighted their identity rather than assimilation (p. 35). As Escobedo explains, one authority was upset that Pachuca girls insisted on a “square” (fair) deal and saw this as needless troublemaking (p. 39). In fact, this is an example of

how the Pachuca identity empowered women to recognize and fight back against the discrimination they faced based on class, race, and gender. As one Pachuca interviewee explained in *Pachucas and Pachucos in Tucson: Situated Border Lives*, she would get in fights because she would not accept poor treatment from others (Cummings 2009, p. 22). This shows that the portrayal in the media of Pachucas as dangerous gang members who were prone to fighting does not capture the complexity of the Pachuca identity and does not seek to understand *why* some women fought back.

Pachuquismo became popular because the subculture represented individuality and the experience of non-white American teens and for these reasons the identity became so contentious. Like other youth subcultures, Pachuquismo rebelled against social norms, but to fully understand why Pachuquismo was so controversial it is important to examine why race, gender, and class consciousness posed a threat to WWII American society. At the time, the war effort depended on the participation of all Americans. This relied on erasing the individual experiences of what it meant to be American, which for many non-white Americans was defined by discrimination and second-class citizenship. The refusal to conform to “American” expectations of gender and beauty on the part of Pachucas threatened the assimilationist agenda, and media characterizations deemed Pachucas as unpatriotic. The portrayal of Pachuquismo as distinctly un-American affected the reputation of the entire Mexican American community, and thus, the Pachuca identity became highly stigmatized during the war. For example, cartoons depicted zoot suits as unpatriotic and some went as far as to claim that Pachuc@s were anti-American (Ramírez 2009, p. 63). Zoot suits, with their oversized and slouchy silhouette, were seen as frivolous during a time when the US government restricted the amount of fabric Americans were allowed to use in order to support the war effort (p. 61). Nonetheless, the zoot suit remained popular among Mexican American teens who carefully saved money to buy the coveted style. Not only was the style associated with excess, but Pachuc@s were accused of being lazy when they took part in leisure activities popular among young people at that time. During wartime, the US had called for all Americans to participate in the war effort which included an increase of women working outside of the home, and to be seen as not sacrificing for the war effort became synonymous with being un-American (p. 58). Ultimately, Pachuc@s were scapegoated and decried as a threat to America, resulting in tensions that would boil over during the Zoot Suit Riots.

As Diana Cabral explains, “Pachucas in many ways had it worse than the Pachucos. Not only did the zoot suit grow to define them as troublemakers and unpatriotic but it also grew to define them as shameless and sexually loose” (Cabral 2014, p. 42). Nonetheless, for many young people, the Pachuc@ persona and style was a form of self-expression that provided independence and an opportunity to express class and racial consciousness. It is important to note that there is no one correct interpretation of Pachuquismo, since the reasons for why women adopted the style varied. Even though not every woman who wore elements of the style saw themselves as Pachucas, they often described their fashion decisions as part of a desire to express individuality and independence. Simple rebelliousness to not capture the complexity of Pachuca identity, which in reality permitted Mexican American women to express themselves and redefine the expectations of femininity.



Figure 1. Woman Wearing Zoot Suit  
Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection



Figure 2. Two Women  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles





Figure 3. Jennie Ontiveras  
Personal collection of Rusty Oleum

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## SECTION THREE: EXPRESSING

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*"Write what should not be forgotten."*

- Isabel Allende, Chilean Author of *La casa de los espíritus* and *La ciudad de las bestias*



## **Aren't You Nervous? Or Is it Just Me?**

Francisco Velasquez

---

1. When the war begins, it is a tile roof, just 17,000 miles between the porch and the vultures above it. Death resembles a lot of the sun, but she and him are at peace. They share each other in tender rotation, filtered like bait. (grief is small) But they learn to peel alive the pain for months. It is how they live. From wall to wall their skeletons travel between dirt and death.
2. The coyotes find them migrating in deep water. Clinging to two black bottles and a scent of garlic for good luck, (bitter) their snake-skin weaves across the hot water.
3. At El Rio Grande, it almost ends.
4. "Plata or Plomo." When they make the train.
5. They regroup and restart the hike with broken ribs. It is above them now. To be tender in the face of death.
6. "In case there is no way out." "Carry my blood."
7. The night starves a slaughter.
8. Awake. To touch the torch in Juarez is terminal. You, uninvited to the city of fire --- them, watching you leak like a faucet.
9. The heat is hostile. You find a slaughter.
10. As soon it becomes common to walk in the silent land of open graves, you are already piled at the bottom of the mountain.
11. Sometimes when the war begins, you are at the porch. And at others, when the vultures rise above it, the heat is only a filter of ashes, in a slaughter.

## On His Way Home

Francisco Velasquez

---

17 miles: 7 people attempted suicide, 3 did.

“El Poso” is when you do something you’re not supposed to do.  
You’re completely alone. You only eat what you are given.

1 section has 6 jails.

If I would’ve stayed there 4 more weeks  
I believe I would’ve gone blind.

There is no time to sleep. (My eyes hurt). The brightness of the lights is sacrifice.

I have three sons in Charlotte, North Carolina.  
I miss them. I am sure they miss me.

Going to work has never been this hard.  
Or scary.  
Donald Trump destroyed my hope of peace, my piece of freedom.

10 miles: They came to my house.

I was in the yard.  
They asked for my papers.  
They came in the house and told me to lock the doors, because they were going to take me.

I’ve been here since 1999, got deported in 1998. I ask for voluntarily leave and tried to come back for my son as soon as much as I could. I just went home, and I came back, to work.

Sometimes wives can’t take on the task of supporting the entire family. It isn’t correct what Trump did. ICE isn’t doing what trump said, they’re doing more.

4 miles: I’m from a small village in Honduras. I paid a lot of money to leave, but I just gotta work harder now.

If the person isn’t a criminal, give them their liberty.

Family Dollar - 800 feet: It’s not valid to repeat. This trauma.

- [name withheld to prevent immigrant from deportation]

## My Fear of Butterflies

Jesica Campos

---

Migrating north,  
the monarch travels thousands  
of miles from Mexico  
The wind blows and they scatter,  
she scatters,  
Though she was never meant to  
finish the voyage, it was her  
offspring who was to make  
the trip back home, up north  
and make a life, her survival meaning  
more than just success, a journey with  
an ever-relentless weight on her  
thin, fragile, newborn wings, ancestors  
rooting for her progress, born  
out of hope and tinted with her  
heritage, a destiny pre-determined,  
a journey to embark with no prior  
knowledge, the pressure grows  
stronger as the winds push back,  
fighting harder to stay afloat  
against every obstacle

but it'd be so easy to let go.  
drift away with the wind wherever  
it went, being in bliss for the  
first time, but the constant reminder  
of how much her progress means,  
landing in temptation is  
a field of milkweed, the city of  
gold a false notion



**They**  
Emily Rivera-Paura

---

I am not Mexican or American enough for them  
It is because of them my identity is eternally living in limbo  
Between Mexican and American

They tell me I am not Mexican because my name isn't "Mexican"  
They say my name "es un nombre para las güeras"

They're not wrong.  
My name is not Margarita after my grandmother or Maria Del Rayo after my mother  
Instead I am named after the American cartoon, Emily Elizabeth  
When my parents came to the United States Emily Elizabeth was who they'd hope I'd become  
An American teenage girl that lived in a house with a white picket fence

They tell me I am not American because my name isn't "American"  
They say "you're saying it wrong"

They're not wrong.  
Birthday cards from my family don't spell my name in "English"  
E-m-i-l-y  
Birthday cards from my family members spell my name in "Spanish"  
E-m-e-l-y  
When I say my name, I pronounce every e and i as if they were followed by an h  
My pronunciation does not limit me  
I say the same letters  
just with different sounds

They tell me I am not Mexican because I don't look "Mexican"  
They say "tu te miras como las güeras"

They're not wrong.  
My light pigmentation brings forward a possibility of ancestral colonization.  
If "güeras" are those that look like the European colonizer  
Then yes.  
I do look like a "güera"  
My mestiza consciousness allows me to see through the harsh possibility of  
one of my European ancestors colonizing one of my indigenous ancestors

They tell me I am not American because I don't look "American"  
They say "you don't have the blonde hair or blue eyes"

They're not wrong.  
My skin is "white passing"  
But my dark hair and brown eyes are not "white passing"  
My features do not match the colonizer  
Therefore, to them I am not "American"

They are wrong.  
I am Mexican-American and I am American-Mexican.  
They are wrong.  
I am not this or that  
I am everything I say I am

- Meztizha

## Jacket Design with Inspiration from Migration Movements

Jessica Gomez

I made this jacket in one of my Textile and Fashion Design classes. I wanted a way to make campus feel more like home, so I started to create and alter garments that resonated with my identity. This jacket is a symbol for migration. I painted monarch butterflies on the front and a rose on the back. The butterflies are a known symbol for Dreamers/DACA recipients. The rose is supposed to signify Mexican culture. When painting the rose it reminded me of a Mazapan, a candy that I would eat as a kid. I decided to use denim as a fabric of choice because it's strong and durable. This is also a symbol as it represents the strength that immigrants have. Many immigrants leave their home in search for better opportunities and are faced with so much hate and oppression. When making this jacket I considered the purpose behind every design element. The jacket signifies so much more than meets the eye. This was the first piece that really meant a lot to me because I was able to create a story within a garment. It is the first of many to come.



**Disconnected**  
Destiny Bruce

---

The room is filled  
with familiar and unfamiliar faces  
Family that I know, extended family that goes on further than my brain can wrap around  
All connected by an invisible bond  
other than the blood pumping through their bodies  
They are all connected through their language  
Each one switching between two languages  
In a beautiful dance  
That everyone seems to know  
Everyone apart from me  
And soon semi-familiar faces come closer to me  
enticing me with a warm hello  
But that hello makes my heart pound  
Until I can feel the beat in my throat  
As I worry of how long I can manage  
Before they realize that I am a fraud  
One who pretends to be part of this dance troupe  
But can't get past step 5  
before falling on her face  
And then the moment is up  
They realize that I only catch on to parts of their sentences  
The English parts  
And while they try to hide their disappointment  
it still shines through, just enough for me to see  
That they too think that I don't truly belong here  
But even though I don't belong here  
I don't belong out there either  
Too white for this  
Too much of other things for the rest of society

## **My Education Migration Story**

Breanna Estrada

---

I experienced a significant transition when I transferred from grammar school to high school. This change was not just about attending a different school; it also consisted of being in a different cultural environment. My experiences in grammar school were drastically different than my experiences in high school. Attending a school where students are united together through similar experiences is much more inviting than being in a school where certain students are isolated due to their identity. There may be a significant improvement in the amount of money a school has and the quality of their facilities. However, these positive assets do not always lead to a positive student experience.

The grammar school I attended was Frances Xavier Warde School (FXW) which is a private Catholic school that has two campuses located in downtown Chicago. It was clear to both my sister and I that we attended a school that “had money.” FXW had two campuses, in order to accommodate pre-k through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, a large auditorium, a gym that had its own floor, a science lab, and much more. FXW’s wealth can be represented in the invitations that they sent out for my 8th graduation. The invitations were elegant and demonstrated the school’s wealth. They showed exclusivity by requiring an invitation and tickets to be able to attend the graduation. However, the elegant invitation and tickets neglected to show the negative side of the school for people of color, which consisted of being looked down on and being bullied by peers. My experience at FXW, one of the “top” schools in the area, demonstrates that a school’s wealth does not determine one’s experience at a school. The exclusivity and focus on money at FXW turned out to be detrimental to my experience at the school. The focus on wealth ultimately put me in a spotlight and revealed to the people around me that my family was not like most families enrolled in the school. While at FXW, both my peers and staff poked at the fact that my family was low-income. When teachers found out about the poor neighborhood I was living in, they called my mother to suggest she move us out of the neighborhood, and to imply that I would never graduate from high school. When my peers found out my background, I began to experience bullying. I was called a “Mexican drug lord” daily due to my ethnicity and my need for medicine because I was sick. Although FXW had the newest technology, the best sports teams, and updated facilities, there were feelings of exclusion due to the absence of opportunity to feel part of the community.

On the other hand, in high school, I attended Golder College Prep, a charter school in Chicago which, in comparison to FXW, had no money. GCP had a multipurpose room which was used as its lunchroom, gym, and auditorium due to its lack of funding to gain new and more facilities. The main difference between FXW and GCP was not the infrastructure. The most significant difference was my comfortability with my peers and the way in which the faculty treated me. Since GCP had a predominately Hispanic student make-up, I felt more comfortable and united with students who had similar experiences as me. An object that represents this is my school uniform. We all wore the same uniform, and no one could break the dress code. The uniform represents how even during tribulations, such as Trump being elected as president, we stood united and supported one another. The uniform depicts the unity between the students. However, it does not demonstrate how the school lacked resources and facilities.

The GCP facilities were very limited. During three of my four years in high school, we had gym class either at the park, a local public gym, or on the block of our school (running laps around the block). Despite having very few facilities, the students were united and worked collectively inside and outside of class. The lack of financial resources did not stop the students from coming together and refusing to fall into typical high school norms, such as having “cliques.” Our unity as students represents how the finances, the facilities, and even the safety in the neighborhood, did not determine our experiences at GCP. We felt welcomed because students and faculty stood together and held similar ideas and experiences.

At FXW, I was bullied by my fellow peers and was called a “Mexican drug lord” daily. FXW advertised diversity and unity through gala events that suggested that all students were comfortable there, even though it wasn’t true. But at GCP, I was welcomed by both my peers and teachers and had constant support to always do my best. Although one school had more money than the other, money does not affect the comfortability a student has at their school. What will truly affect a student’s experience is their connection to the school’s community.

## A Closer Look at MG Ricio's *How Would You Feel* Spoken-Word Performance

Mauricio Garcia

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My spoken-word piece, *How Would You Feel*, was written to raise awareness of issues that must be addressed within mainstream media, such as colonization, immigration, poverty, capitalism, racism, discrimination, unequal education, and other connected problems. This personal piece comes from the frustrations that arise in everyday life. For instance, the ending of the piece says “No dejes que apaguen tus metas, que tu destino es para ser brillante” which translates to “Don’t let them blow away your goals, Your destiny is to be brilliant.” This section is significant because it shows our resiliency. As a minoritized group, we face discrimination daily. We are told we can’t prosper, and we encounter institutionalized racism everywhere, for example when we navigate education systems or technology. Nevertheless, despite all obstacles, we choose to NEVER give up and to continue moving forward.

Due to how personal this piece is I was unsure about making this piece public. However, this is an embodiment of art, and I perceive art as a mechanism that fuels inspiration and thus, isn’t meant to be restricted or held back. Our voice is indispensable, and it can be utilized to make an impact today and for generations to come. I encourage people to listen to this piece and to feel free to write their own responses or reflections on it.

I performed this piece at the University of Wisconsin - Madison in an event associated with the Studio Community. The video can be found on my YouTube channel known as MG Ricio. This performance is just one of many. If you would like to support and witness more updates on my artistic journey, follow me on Instagram @mg\_ricio and subscribe to my YouTube. Blessings. Pa’ adelante seguimos!

A new decade. New adventures. A new MG Experience.

### How would you feel? [Transcript as performed]

How would you

How would you

How would you feel?

How would you feel?

Coming from a place where you can’t succeed,

Come from a place where you can barely eat,

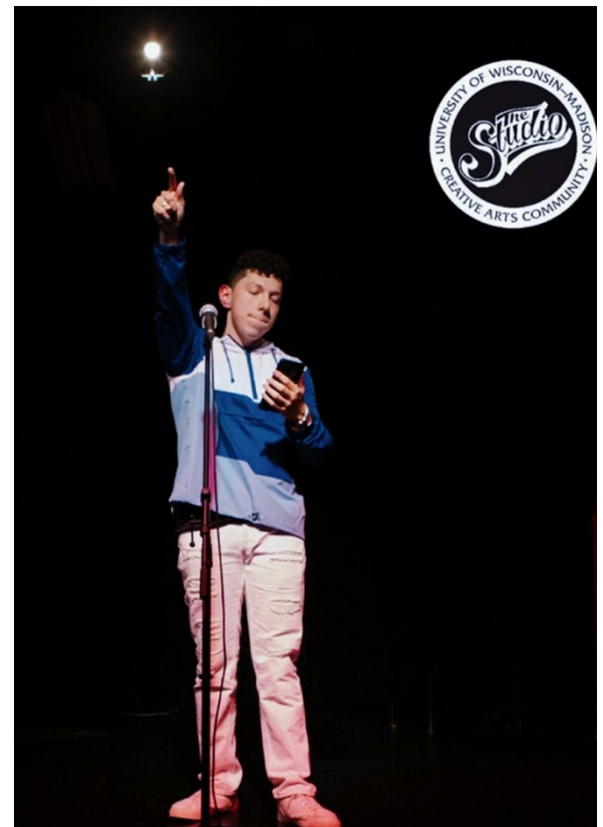
Come from a place where your own friends get shot and rot

But you can't trust the cops because they like to pop at other races  
Now the streets they bleed,  
No time for sympathy because we got places to be,  
We have to do something, we got human beings to feed.  
I don't ever consume no drugs no weed, but every time I go outside my neighborhood and they  
hear I'm latino,  
Now they think I'm full of bad deeds,  
Woah Woah Woah, What, do you want me deceased,  
In a country that is so called the Land of the free?  
That's so pitiful to me.  
Where I come from you're considered lucky if you succeed past a high school degree,  
So don't have the guts to say that minorities lack knowledge and that college should lower their  
standards for us  
When we come from places where there's barely any resources to see,  
Where suicide dreams run wild and I have to proceed  
to sweat and bleed with no life guarantee.  
It's expensive to breathe  
Sheeez  
What type of hypocrisy is this world,  
That can't process the me  
I agree...  
How would you  
How would you  
How would you  
How would you feel  
How would you feel  
How would you feel  
How would you feel if you come from the middle of a nothing to a middle of a something to be  
told I can barely be conscious  
So I can fully be haunted



They try to trap my people in cages like boxes  
So we can get sick  
and then be ill  
and then be nauseous.  
Woah so much nonsense,  
How would you feel if you had to see your own loved ones burn up,  
See babies on the floor cry with no follow up,  
This place is a cage  
Where your race determines if you gon' get lockup  
or if the popo gon' use the position of power to get you pop pop

Desde pequeño  
Yo tenía estos sueños  
Enseñar la música al mundo entero  
No te rindas chico o chica no tengas miedo  
Más vale intentar que soñar toda la vida entero  
  
Hay que siempre siguele adelante  
No dejes que unos chamaquitos te digan que no eres nadie  
Vivir la vida es importante  
No caigas con un farsante  
Tu tienes miles de sueños gigantes  
Pero arrancamos con todo extravagante  
No dejes que apaguen tus metas  
Que tu destino es para ser brillante  
  
Mirarte,  
Durante,  
Tu vida entera  
Hay que seguirle adelante  
Tu tiempo es ahora  
No dejes que te arrebaten.



## ***The Adventures of the Modernist Cannibals, Enrique Chagoya***

Erika Esparza

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Enrique Chagoya juxtaposes indigenous, colonial, and modern images in his 1999 print *Les Aventures des Cannibales Modernistas, The Adventures of the Modernist Cannibals*. Starting from the left, the cartoon character Asterix the Gaul stares curiously to the right out of a Roman-looking architectural frontispiece. In the middle, we see an Aztec with fierce facial features and the iconic *ollin* symbol representative of movement directly below them. Then we see the decapitated head and dismembered hand of a European in bowls. There is also a monster creeping in the front right corner. This mixture of art from different time periods could symbolize a clash of cultures and encounters.

An example of a clash of cultures is shown through the symbols that replicate this notion that the Europeans embodied God's grace. The white hand outstretched so gracefully, even in death, and the angelic face are resembling of the Spanish Renaissance art era that began in 1492 with the beginning of the invasion of the Americas, where the human and spirit worlds were mixed through works of art (Fuentes 2009). The cartoon figure looking at the Aztec cannibal demonstrates a mixture of past and contemporary art. The Aztec is depicted as evil in order to give off an image of a savage and highlight the theme of cannibalism. The views of indigenous people partaking in cannibalism provided a way for the Spanish to justify their cruelty towards them.

This piece overall mirrors how the justification of the enslavement and ultimate genocide of the Aztecs was possible by the demonization of the Aztecs through the exaggeration of instances of cannibalism. The artist brings to light a different perspective on popular history. It criticizes the traditionally accepted Eurocentric narrative and pushes for a decolonial examination and response. The innocent victim narrative of the Spanish is completely contradictory to the reality of what the conquistadores did. Colonization is a key theme in the piece visible in the juxtaposition of both indigenous and European figures.

The artist is attempting to unmask the truths about coloniality and modernity. The products of coloniality and modernity are the same, the arrival of Europeans marked a new era, one that would re-envision the Americas, its peoples and permanently altering the identity of the New World. Chagoya's piece is significant because its distorted portrayal of the Aztecs, embodies a key element in the colonization of Mexico. To have a modern piece reflective of the

legacy of colonization in Mesoamerica prompts us to recognize that it is still a legacy that lives on today through present-day demonizing and dehumanization of indigenous peoples.

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Chagoya, Enrique. *The Adventures of the Modernist Cannibals (Les Aventures des Cannibales Modernistas)*. 1999, Chazen Museum of Art.

<http://embarkkiosk.chazen.wisc.edu/VieO1408?sid=9725&x=647298>

## ***Bullet in the Back, Gronk***

Daisey Velazquez

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When one looks at this piece, *Bullet in the Back* by Chicano artist Gronk, one notices the woman first. A majestic looking figure that appears to be on a stage. Without knowing the name or examining the print, made from Linoleum cut, one could imagine her as a singer performing for her audience. But upon observing the print closely one notices that the faces in the audience seem disgruntled. They all seem to be men, and the red spots of color introduce tension to the scene. This 1995 print can arouse emotion and interest in just about anyone. Is this artwork meant to be a bold statement of feminism?

When further analyzing this print one notices that the woman is the focus. She is erect in the middle of the chaos. She is the clearest part of the piece even though she is covered with a black dress and black gloves. This may represent elegance and importance. Her presence on the stage may even represent privilege. However, her face cannot be seen. Maybe this is to resemble the feeling of being lost or unseen even when in front of a crowd. It seems like she is looking out into the crowd, maybe she is not lost but speaking out with power. Maybe this is a Chicana feminist standing up for her rights. By her being dressed elegantly she may be ensuring that the men will listen, but they do not like what she is saying. The faces and fragments of body parts propose chaos and tension in the crowd. The red spots may represent blood or pain. Perhaps the red also represents the pain and suffering many people face trying to stand up for what they believe is right.

Gronk decided to portray a strong woman here. However, like in many of his other works, it is unknown if he meant for this piece to be feminist in motive. She is standing with her arms held high, showing vulnerability but also power. To me, this piece is relevant today. There is chaos in our society, just like the crowd in the print, and we must be, like the woman, willing to stand up for what we believe. Despite how much pain we have gone through, how much or little privilege we may have, or how much tension we may cause, if we know our motives are true, we should speak them out.





Nicandro, Glugio Gronk. *Bullet in the Back*. 1954, Chazen Museum of Art.

<http://embarkkiosk.chazen.wisc.edu/Obj4590?sid=6231&x=173681>

## ***Run! It is the Police!*, Diego Marcial Rios**

Carolina Gittrich

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*Run! It is the Police!* a woodcut created in 1987, is an important piece Diego Marcial Rios created while studying at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. When looking at this art piece, one immediately sees that the “police” is a skeleton with medieval armor covering its legs, skull, and five arms. Many of the arms are held up with strings, with one arm ending with a shooting gun rather than a hand. This piece may intend to represent how the police is an ancient institution that is controlled by a higher power. The mysterious puppeteer controls the police, while the police mindlessly follow orders. The gun-hand combination is significant in showing how the police tend to use a gun like part of their body, while it fires blindly, running in the opposite direction. The skeleton has no regard for what it is shooting, simply that it *is* shooting.

Upon closer inspection of the skeleton, one realizes that it is not merely a skeleton. It is half human, half machine. There are gears connecting the legs, a bolt imbedded in the skull, and screws scattered on the ground. This gives the impression that the police, as machines, are cold and indifferent towards who they encounter—strictly following their mission.

The stark contrast between the light and the dark colors accentuate key aspects such as the arms, hands, boot, and skull of the skeleton. This darkness is caused by Rios carving more of the wood out to create such a contrast. The physical work put in to create this seems to represent the physical feelings of fear felt by Rios.

The disturbing combination of the strings and the emotionless machine portray why many fear the police. The law is different for people of color because of racial profiling. There is long-standing documentation of the discrimination that persists for people of color due to prejudice and negative stereotyping within these institutions. Rios himself says about *Run! It is the Police*, that “the inspiration...is derived from my fear of the police and other oppressive agencies in the United States” (Rios). The police use incarceration as a way of establishing power. This racially disproportionate act of imprisoning people and then using them for manual labor diminishes their standing as citizens and of their rights. Institutions such as the police force use this power to create an atmosphere of fear where they can recklessly make decisions, which *Run! It is the Police!* displays.



Rios, Diego Marcial. *Run! It is the Police!*. 1987, Chazen Museum of Art.

<http://embarkkiosk.chazen.wisc.edu/Obj11260?sid=19119&x=648475>

## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

*Latinx Studies Journal*, previously known as *Concientización*, is a student academic journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chicanx and Latinx experience and thought. We are committed to creating alliances across boundaries of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. Submissions include essays, poems, and artwork related to Chicanxs/Latinxs in the United States. *Latinx Studies Journal* also gives students the opportunity to participate in the publication process as authors and editors.

*Latinx Studies Journal* invites UW-Madison student authors to submit scholarship on topics concerning Chicanx & Latinx experience and thought that are thoughtful, substantive, and scholarly in nature:

- Research Study
- Scholarly Essay or Composition
- Book and Movie Reviews
- Art and Poetry

Please visit *Latinx Studies Journal*'s website for additional information:

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