

Peering Beyond the Fence:

Reviewing the Literature to Inform Dialogues and Practices for Improved Latino and Mexican Education at Hispanic Serving and Intercultural Universities

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Abstract

United States studies on the Latino/Hispanic populations in Hispanic Serving Institutions and Mexican studies on students in Intercultural Universities have garnered great interest for those studying post-secondary education. Hispanic Serving Institutions and Intercultural Universities are special purpose institutions that are driven to create diversity and improved education for under-represented ethnic/racial groups. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the importance of shared knowledge across U.S.-Mexican institutions of higher education to (1) better inform policies and practice that may lead to improving educational conditions of the Latino/Hispanic and Mexican-origin students and (2) begin dialogues on the meaning of diversity for special purpose institutions and Hispanic/Latino/Mexican-origin institutional agents that seek to improve academic dispositions for these heterogeneous groups. Finally, recommendations for future research are discussed.

Key words: Intercultural Universities, Education for Ethnic Groups, Hispanic Serving Institutions

Resumen

En los Estados Unidos los estudios sobre las poblaciones latinas e hispanas de las instituciones que atienden a los hispanos y que se dedican a los estudios mexicanos en los alumnos de las universidades interculturales, son de gran interés para los estudiosos de la educación posterior a la secundaria. Las instituciones que atienden a hispanos (*Hispanic Serving Institutions*) y las Universidades Interculturales (*Intercultural Universities*) son dependencias con fines especiales que se ven obligadas a fomentar la diversidad, así como a mejorar la educación para los grupos étnicos y raciales con menor representación. El objetivo de esta revisión bibliográfica es examinar la importancia de los conocimientos que comparten las instituciones de educación superior de los Estados Unidos y de México para: (1) informar sobre las políticas y las prácticas que pueden conducir a mejorar las condiciones educativas de los estudiantes latinos o hispanos y de origen mexicano; y (2) iniciar diálogos sobre el significado de la diversidad para las entidades que cumplen objetivos especiales. Por último, se discuten las recomendaciones para investigaciones futuras.

Palabras clave: Universidad Interculturales, Educación para grupos étnicos, Instituciones que atienden a hispanos

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Equity and college student success has become the subject of great interest to those studying post-secondary education in America. Increasingly, higher education is seen to play an important and unique role in shaping the country’s social outcomes and advancing its democratic mission. As a social institution, higher education is the vehicle through which society’s complex civic, social, national, and global demands are navigated (Kerr, 2001).

African American, Asians, and European Americans are but a few ethnic groups who comprise institutions of higher learning. Although these students have been subject to research that looks at various aspects of their educational experience, the study of Latinos or Hispanics (a person of Latin-American descent living in the United States) in institutions designated as

Hispanic Serving Institutions has been relatively new. Similarly, the ethnic and racial makeup of Mexican society is composed of indigenous groups, although largely ignored.

Traditionally, research has heavily relied on Mexican or *mestizo* (people of mixed ancestry by way of miscegenation) students; however, recently, investigators are drawing interest on indigenous groups among Mexican universities. Much how Mexicans are a subgroup of Latinos in the U.S., so are indigenous groups among the larger Mexican context.

This paper attempts to expand current Hispanic Serving Institution discussions by exploring how Intercultural Universities—special purpose Mexican universities—grapple with issues of diversity and incorporation. This manuscript specifically examines California’s Hispanic Serving Institution four-year public universities (California State University) and Mexico’s four-year public Intercultural Universities. Comparisons are made between Intercultural Universities and California Hispanic Serving Institutions since California is the state that has (1) the largest Latino and Mexican-origin population (Foxen, 2011; Johnson, 2011); (2) Latinos comprise 50 percent of the students in the states public kindergarten through 12th grade education system (California Department of Education, 2011); (3) the California State University is the nations largest public university system (The California State University, 2011); and (4) California has the largest number of Hispanic Serving Institutions in the nation (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008).

First, this manuscript begins with a brief description of Latinos in the U.S. and reviews Latino students’ demographic milieu. Second, a short description of Minority Serving Institutions is provided as a backdrop for discussing Hispanic Serving Institutions. Third, Hispanic Serving Institutions and California State University Hispanic Serving Institutions are introduced along with how Latinos are situated among these institutions. Fourth, empirical research will be highlighted beginning with California State University Hispanic Serving Institutions and later with Hispanic Serving Institutions to provide general insight as to what investigations say about these special purpose intuitions. Intercultural Universities will be examined equally and in parallel fashion to Hispanic Serving Institutions. Finally, this essay provides future considerations as to how both Hispanic Serving Institutions and Intercultural Universities can provide to be reference tools in developing how researchers and practitioners rethink diversity and academic engagement and success among the larger pan ethnic Latino populace to advance each country’s post-secondary educational goals.

Latino

Demography

The Latino demography is well documented. Nationally these populations account for 15 percent of the total populace with estimates that Latinos will makeup one quarter of the nation's mosaic by 2015. These figures of exponential growth are also seen at other geographic levels. Latinos have come to dominate city and school populations. California's current Latino population is at about 36 percent and since 2001; over 50 percent of all newborns have been of Latino descent. California's future 5.8 million persons will be composed of 47.8 percent Latinos, and Latinos will comprise more than 50 percent of the new entrants to the labor force by 2017 (Hayes-Bautista, 2004).

Although Latino students and their parents hold high educational aspirations, Latinos remain underrepresented in four-year colleges and universities (Auerbach, 2001; Ceja, 2006; Zarate, 2006). Educational Latino student outcomes are relatively low compared to other groups. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (Ryan & Siebens, 2012), 29 percent of European Americans ages 25 and older obtained a bachelor's degree or higher in 2009. To juxtapose, 13 percent of Latinos in the same age group obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.

In this vein, Latinos face increased obstacles within the context of the extant overall worsening of educational disparities. So, whereas education often harkened to a bettering of the socioeconomic position of traditionally underserved constituents, present exigencies may effectively stem Latinos' opportunities in achieving even a small measure of educational parity with the general populace. In California, the presence of Latinos has increased exponentially over recent years. It is estimated that the Latino population will constitute half of the state's population by 2040 (Hayes-Bautista, 2004). It is crucial to accommodate this population in state and national public educational systems given the relationship between higher education and economic productivity. Efforts to increase Latino educational parity and outcomes are of national interest.

Mexican

Demography

At the national level there are roughly 112 million Mexicans in the republic (INEGI, 2011) with slightly more males (57 million) than females (54 million). On average, 58 percent of the national population had job stability (ages 14 and over) in 2010. Moreover, in the same year many Mexicans worked in the agricultural, livestock, and fishing industry (about 6 million), while most (about 8 million) worked as professionals (INEGI, 2010).

Nationally, in 2005 indigenous populations accounted for 9 million (Navarrete Linares, 2008), comprised mostly of females (5 million) in comparison to males (4 million), with the majority of indigenous groups found in the states of Oaxaca and Puebla (1.5 and 1.2 million respectively). In 2000, indigenous household primary wage earners were concentrated in simple labor jobs (half a million) and in many instances indigenous persons (half a million) were unemployed (INEGI, 2000). Though indigenous populaces have been part of the formal workforce, in 2000 nevertheless, they received less than two minimum wages (Navarrete Linares, 2008). It is important to note that the Mexican annual census considers individuals to be indigenous solely on the basis of indigenous language proficiency.

It is not known how many indigenous students enroll in post-secondary institutions. What is known, though, is that indigenous students' overall educational attainment levels are significantly lower compared to those of their Mexican or mestizo counterparts. In 2005, it was reported that indigenous people (between the ages of 15 and 64) received primary, secondary, technical, and higher education at lower rates compared to mestizos of the same categorical ages (Navarrete Linares, 2008). To exemplify, while only approximately 200,000 indigenous students received higher education instruction, over 9 million Mexicans did so (Navarrete Linares, 2008).

In Mexico, indigenous groups are often socially, politically, and economically isolated from urban and mestizo society. They speak diverse indigenous languages, most of which do not have written forms. Some speak little or no Spanish, have low levels of literacy, and education, and are often poorer than their non-indigenous counterparts. Indigenous Mexicans face a variety of challenges including poverty, lack of health insurance, substandard housing, and high levels of stress (De la Torre García, 2010; Navarrete Linares, 2008). Although education is commonly thought to be a vehicle for improving material conditions, indigenous education is limited

and indigenous persons occupy the lowest socioeconomic strata and suffer its devastating effects acutely (Meléndez Salinas, 2005). Meanwhile indigenous groups do not reach or graduate from higher education; Mexico's democratic promise is at odds.

Minority Serving-Institutions

The United States federal government has traditionally provided broad support for its higher education institutions. Government assistance ranges from programs providing aid to low-income students, to monies for faculty research. Additionally, the federal government has provided institutional support for Minority Serving Institutions – institutions of higher education that uniquely serve historically underrepresented ethnic/racial groups. Since the end of the Civil War in 1865, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, for instance, have been allocated monies to improve conditions for Black student success. Similarly, Tribal Colleges and Universities gained some support from ties with the federal government during the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s. Tribal Colleges and Universities are those that serve U.S. indigenous groups. More recently, Hispanic Serving Institutions have also received federal support through the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1992 (Bridges, Cambridge, Kuh, & Leegwater, 2005; Gasman, 2008).

Intercultural

Education

Intercultural education in the 1970s attempted to make education for indigenous populations intercultural by taking schooling to indigenous communities (Czarny Krischkauzky, 2007). During this time intercultural education attempted to recognize the need for bilingual and bicultural education, however, many indigenous teachers, educated in assimilationist schools, did not practice intercultural modes (Schmelkes, 2009). The idea was to preserve indigenous autonomy, while teachers who would likely speak indigenous languages educated these students to guarantee improved educational processes. The thinking behind this also came from the idea that if education was taken to indigenous communities, students would be reciprocal with their communities and be less likely to migrate. Commonly referred to as multicultural education in the U.S., the current form of intercultural education in Mexico hopes to incorporate bilingual, indigenous, and ethnic sensitivities to the conventional educational system and is a “hot button” issue with Mexican educational researchers, especially

among primary education in urban spaces such as Mexico City (Crispín Bernardo & Athié Martínez, 2006; Durin, 2007; Gonzalez Apadoca, 2009; Schmelkes, 2009; Barriga Villanueva, 2008; Czarny Krischkauskzy, 2007; Raesfeld, 2009; Saldívar, 2006; Mijangos-Noh, 2009).

The aforementioned intercultural education in Mexico has emphasized primary levels of schooling. However, the intercultural movement has also taken route to higher education. According to the Sub-Ministry of Higher Education (SES in Spanish acronym) intercultural universities are defined as follows:

La misión de las Universidades Interculturales es promover la formación de profesionales comprometidos con el desarrollo económico, social y cultural, particularmente, de los pueblos indígenas del país y del mundo circundante; revalorar los conocimientos de los pueblos indígenas y propiciar un proceso de síntesis con los avances del conocimiento científico; fomentar la difusión de los valores propios de las comunidades, así como abrir espacios para promover la revitalización, desarrollo y consolidación de lenguas y culturas originarias.

Las Universidades Interculturales tienen como objetivo impartir programas formativos en los niveles de profesional asociado, licenciatura, especialización, maestría y doctorado, pertinentes al desarrollo regional, estatal y nacional, orientados a formar profesionales comprometidos con el desarrollo económico, social y cultural en los ámbitos comunitario, regional y nacional, cuyas actividades contribuyan a promover un proceso de valoración y revitalización de las lenguas y culturas originarias.

The mission of Intercultural Universities is to promote the formation of committed professionals in economic and sociocultural development, particularly, in the indigenous pueblos of the country and the world; revalue the knowledge of indigenous pueblos and conduce a synthesized process of scientific community advances; foment the diffusion of ones values of the communities, likewise open spaces to promote the revitalization, development, and consolidation of original languages and cultures.

Intercultural Universities' objectives are to partake in formal programs at the associate, bachelor, specialization, master and doctoral levels, pertinent to regional, state and national development, oriented to form committed professionals with the economic and sociocultural community ambiance, regional and national, whose activities shall contribute to promote a valuing and revitalization process of the indigenous languages and original cultures (*Heurisititc*, n.d.).

The Hispanic

Serving Institution

Traditionally, the Department of Education has defined Hispanic Serving Institutions as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with twenty-five percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment. At least half of the Hispanic student population must also be low income. The defining characteristic of Hispanic Serving Institutions is their Hispanic enrollment. However, there is another prevailing definition. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities –considered the only national association that represents these institutions– parallels its Hispanic Serving Institution definition with that of the Department of Education, except that full-time equivalent undergraduate student enrollment is disregarded, meaning full-time and part-time students at the undergraduate or graduate level of the institution are counted. For this reason, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Hispanic Serving Institutions. The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities for instance considers Hispanic Serving Institution numbers nearing four-hundred fifty institutions, while the federal government estimates approximately three-hundred thirty (Stearns & Watanabe, 2002). With few exceptions, however, the vast majority of the literature considers the federal government's definition of Hispanic Serving Institutions. With government Hispanic Serving Institution designation, institutions are eligible for Title V funds, which serve to support institutions in a variety of ways, including faculty and curriculum development (Contreras *et al.*, 2008).

Given the aforementioned prerequisites for federal Hispanic Serving Institution consideration, currently 13 of the 23 California State University campuses are Hispanic Serving Institutions (See Table 1). The three California State Universities with the largest total Latino headcount and Hispanic Serving Institution designation are Bakersfield (41.2%), San Bernardino (43.1%), and Los Angeles (47.5%). Moreover, in the fall of 2010, 27.3% of all California State University students were Latino (The California State University, 2010).

Additionally, in the same term and year, 19.7% of all California State University students were of Mexican American descent (The California State University, 2010). As for Mexican Americans, these students are represented in all California State University campuses; however the California State University (2010-2011a) reports that in fall 2010, Mexican Americans

had highest levels (undergraduate and graduate) of campus representation at California State University, Los Angeles (34%), San Bernardino (33%) and Bakersfield (32.8%). Importantly, the California State University system defines Mexican Americans as all persons descending from any of the original people of Mexico (The California State University, 2010-2011b). Table I further illustrates Latino and Mexican American populations in California State Universities designated Hispanic Serving Institutions.

Table I
Characteristics of Latinos and Mexican Americans
among California State University Hispanic Serving Institutions

California State University	City	Fall 2010 Percent Enrollment	
		Mexican American	Other Latino
Bakersfield	Bakersfield	32.8	8.4
Channel Islands	Camarillo	16.6	4.3
Dominguez Hills	Carson	27	13.4
Fresno	Fresno	29.1	5.9
Fullerton	Fullerton	22.5	7.6
Long Beach	Long Beach	21	8.2
Los Angeles	Los Angeles	34	13.5
Monterey Bay	Seaside	25.8	6.4
Northridge	Northridge	19	12.4
Pomona	Pomona	23.5	8.2
San Bernardino	San Bernardino	33	10.1
San Marcos	San Marcos	21.1	6.3
Stanislaus	Turlock	30.3	4.4

The Intercultural University

Beginning in 2003, the formation of Intercultural Universities has been largely based on the commitment of state governments, where these universities depend on two main sources of funding (state and federal government). This means Intercultural Universities are created upon state-to-federal agreements and their continuous funding lie at the discretion

of annual legislative budget approvals. Ideally, funding for Intercultural Universities comes equally from the state and federal governments. Infrastructure and academic endowments have come by way of state governments, the *Comisión Nacional Para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas*, and the *Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe* (Schmelkes, 2008). In this way, Intercultural Universities have forged a network called *Red de Universidades Interculturales* to sustain and further develop institutional capacity building (i.e., research, curriculum, and faculty development). Table II presents the current list of Intercultural Universities in Mexico.

Table II

Universidad Intercultural	City, State
Chiapas	San Cristóbal de Las Casas
Estado de Tabasco	Tacotalpa
Estado de México	
Estado de Puebla	Lipuntahuaca Huehuetla
Veracruzana	Xalapa
Indígena de Michoacán	Pátzcuaro
Maya de Quintana Roo	José María Morelos
Estado de Guerrero	
Universidad Autónoma Indígena de México	El Fuerte, Sinaloa

Note. Universidad Intercultural Estado de México and Estado de Guerrero did not report city

California State University

Hispanic Serving Institutions

To date almost nothing is known about California State Universities that are designated Hispanic Serving Institutions. One descriptive study outlines programs, policies, and practices that make California State University, Monterey Bay a noteworthy example of what a successful Hispanic Serving Institution can be. To summarize, the study explains:

California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) continued to evolve and distinguish itself as an innovative, learner-centered educational institution. The university integrates interdisciplinary academic programs, active and collaborative learning, and service learning through its curriculum. Its mission is clear and compelling, focusing squarely on “Vision

Students,” a reference to the population of students the institution is committed to serving—those who historically have been denied educational opportunity due to their socioeconomic or racial-ethnic backgrounds (Bridges, Kinzie, Nelson Laird, & Kuh, 2008, 228).

Specifically, Bridges *et al.* (2008) consider that student success and engagement at California State University, Monterey Bay come by way of three tenants: faculty adopted assets-based philosophy of talent development (e.g., valuing students’ Spanish), well-developed outcomes-based education approach, and lower and upper-level student service learning requirement. Together, these comprise a learner-centered educational institution.

Hispanic Serving Institutions

Student success and engagement

Bridges *et al.*, (2005) used the Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Student Project to draw on the National Survey of Student Engagement data to determine needs of entering and first-year students, identify obstacles to student progress toward graduation, develop strategic planning, and present Minority Serving Institutions to external communities.

The Building Engagement and Attainment of Minority Students Project helped campuses enhance student learning and success by initially supplying baseline information on ways in which students were engaged in learning at Minority Serving Institutions, structuring ways of using institutional data to identify and create action plans to address areas of needed improvement and providing continued assessment of changes in student learning and success over time. Participants of the project included University of Texas El Paso, Haskell Indian Nations University, and Norfolk State University.

Likewise Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, and Martinez (2004) examined Hispanic Serving Institution campuses through the perspective of administrators and students. The authors reported on findings from a study of eight administrators and fourteen students at Hispanic Serving Institutions in California and Texas. They explored the history of the institutions and the various programs and services available at those campuses. In addition, the benefits and challenges of being a Hispanic Serving Institutions from the viewpoint of students and administrators were described.

Interviews aimed to capture individual’s experiences in an effort to understand and explore how Hispanic Serving Institutions were meeting

the needs of students. It was found that students needed to feel at home in college. The issue of familismo or family interdependence became salient along with creating classroom supportive environments while readying students for employment in less supportive environments. Administrators voiced the importance of having faculty and staff that reflect campus demographics since they can serve as ambassadors of comfort for students. Both students and administrators agreed that having Hispanic faculty and staff was important, although in some instances, students believed that all faculties should foster an ethic of caring regardless of ethnic background.

Alike Dayton *et al.*, (2004), Maestas, Vaquera, and Muñoz Zehr (2007) found that student sense of belonging was also an important contributing factor for student engagement. Factors that influence students' sense of belonging in a highly diverse Hispanic Serving Institution campus –University of New Mexico– were visited. Discussions on the impact of diversity in educational settings and how that diversity might impact a sense of belonging for all students (Hispanics, other minorities, and European Americans) were also held. It was considered that student background characteristics, academic integration, social integration, and experiences/perceptions of diversity all influence campus sense of belonging. Data for the analysis came from The Diverse Democracy Project, a longitudinal study of 10 public universities that varied in geographic location, size, and student enrollment. Data were collected in two periods with the first survey being administered during freshman orientation of the 2000-2001 academic year and the second during spring of the sophomore year (2002).

Of the four diversity issue variables only one was not significant: personal ability with diversity. Both socializing with different racial/ethnic group members, and being supportive of affirmative action goals, was statistically significant and had a positive impact on sense of belonging. Demonstrating positive behaviors toward diversity issues was only slightly significant.

Finally, Torres (2006) focused on students' persistence in college at two Hispanic Serving Institutions and one Predominantly White Institution –institutions with majority European American students. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used to investigate choices Latino/a students made in deciding to stay in college. The interviews used a semi-structured set of questions and probed issues of the college environment, cultural orientation, and family influences. Twenty-five of the participants were Mexican American, four were Puerto Rican, and three were from other countries (Cuba, El Salvador, and Costa Rica). During the interview, students were asked about aspects of the college experience that were helpful and about things they would like to see changed.

Students at the three urban institutions repeatedly referenced mentors, special academic assistance programs, and faculty in making a difference in their college experience. From these findings, Torres (2006) recommends: (1) the need to help students create cognitive maps that show them how to maneuver the college environment; (2) the importance of mentorship to help students create positive symbols; and (3) the need to consider the inclusion of social and cultural values on campus.

Intercultural

Literature

Schmelkes' (2009) work inspects students in Intercultural Universities. The author describes institutions' virtues, giving praise to the 10 universities of this kind that were operating at the time with an estimate of 7000 students across all institutions. Importantly, although most students considered themselves to be indigenous, most did not speak a native language—they were learning one. Interestingly, qualitative observations by institutional agents suggested that students developed high levels of ethnic pride. At the Intercultural University of the State of Mexico, students were asked if they spoke a native language. Out of 280, only 40 indicated they did. At the end of their first semester they were asked the same question and 80 students acknowledged they spoke an indigenous language. With this in mind, Schmelkes (2009) suggests that soon, students would develop ethnic pride, language, and will no longer have to feel that their native tongue is negative, nor hide their ethnic background from others as they did in their earlier education. Inversely, with non-indigenous students who attend these universities, it was seen that they developed attitudes of respect toward their indigenous peers.

According to Schmelkes (2009), these unique institutions are purposely centered on indigenous pedagogies and have a direct link to indigenous communities and its members. In fact, some universities of this type had respected indigenous community members on their Board of Directors.

Although Schmelkes (2009) reports much optimism about Intercultural Universities, she also mentions difficulties and challenges. She underscores that placing universities in indigenous areas does a disservice and that indigenous populations need to be better served in conventional universities. Also some difficulties arise when there is limited funding for these schools, political vulnerability, and drop-out rates. At the Intercultural Universities of Tabasco, State of Mexico, and Chiapas, attrition rates have been con-

cerning (9.2, 15, and 21% respectively). Indigenous populations are least represented in higher education and there is no information available as to how many indigenous students are enrolled in post-secondary institutions. However, Schmelkes (2009) estimates that indigenous populations only comprise between 1 and 3% of higher education enrollment.

Discussion

All together, much of the literature journeys into engaging and having Latino students succeed at Hispanic Serving Institutions. To achieve student success and engagement, the literature discusses the importance of three main themes: students' need to feel at home, the need to have faculty and staff that share similar backgrounds, and students' need to participate in meaningful out of the classroom experiences (e.g., campus student organizations). Further, Merisotis and McCarthy (2005) argue on the importance of shared responsibility that Minority Serving Institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions have in making minority students feel more at ease with their peers, which contributes to their success. Likewise, Bridges *et al.* (2008) add that campus agents (i.e. faculty) need to create asset-based philosophies about Latinos and that participating in service learning projects (out of the classroom experience) benefits these students. Coincidentally, only a handful of studies seem to have intentionally studied student engagement at Hispanic Serving Institutions and one has studied a California State University Hispanic Serving Institution (Bridges *et al.*, 2008).

Although researchers have not quite yet created a blueprint for Latinos and Mexican student success at Hispanic Serving Institutions, and though there are continuous attempts to understand the mechanisms and conditions by which Latino and Mexican students succeed, there seem to be opportunities to advance other dialogues, specifically concerning indigenous Mexican youth in U.S. post-secondary institutions. As previously mentioned, indigenous populations in Mexico comprise a large segment of the Mexican demography, and due to push and pull factors, many of them have migrated and settled in the U.S. It is estimated, for example, that 1 million indigenous Mexicans from the state of Oaxaca alone reside in the United States (Holmes, 2006). Many of some 300,000 indigenous Oaxacans who are Zapotecs reside in Los Angeles County (Bermudez, 2010). These indigenous populations are part of new immigrant diasporas who have heavily establish roots in the U.S. beginning in the 1980s. Current U.S. dialogues give importance to disaggregating Latinos to explore issues of diversity (e.g. Cubans and Puerto Ricans); however, very little consideration has been given to indigenous immigrants from Latin America in schools.

Analogous to the bleak studies on Hispanic Serving Institutions is the lack of understanding any measure of indigenous students that informs university practices for these populaces at Intercultural Universities—perhaps due to the newness of these Mexican institutions. In spite of this, there is growth in research being conducted at institutions of higher learning where institutions are seemingly defining multiculturalism as indigenous language proficiency, though discussion on indigenous student admissions, graduation, and retention rates at traditional “non-indigenous” universities is yet to be determined (Clemente, Higgins, Merino-López, & Sughrua, 2009; Mijangos-Noh, 2009; O’Donnell, 2010; Schmelkes, 2009).

Nonetheless, research related to ethnic indigenous identity and its relationship to schooling and academic outcomes has been modest at best. Inadequately discussed is how indigenous language identity plays a role in meaningful learning, how positive validations of indigenous ethnic identities from other parties may increase indigenous students’ self-esteem (Clemente *et al.*, 2009), and how institutions of higher education create spaces whereby indigenous students rectify previous negative associations toward indigenous identities (Schmelkes, 2009). Then again, all but a few studies are exclusively qualitative in nature and these have not permitted making complete links between indigenous ethnic identities and various elements of schooling, including academic success. Of the scholars that have written about intercultural education, few have been explicit in condemning this education program and simultaneously see this educational agenda as racist in nature. Saldívar (2006) notes that intercultural pedagogical practices fall short of considering the relationship between power and domination. Saldívar (2006) poignantly describes intercultural education as solely understanding and acknowledging differences between two or more distinct cultures—tolerance—and nothing more.

Conclusion

Today universities pretend to evoke an egalitarian spirit. Current higher education agendas are concerned with diversity and what universities and their agents do to meet the needs of a multiversity—a university where faculty, students, administrators, the president are inextricably bound with equal benefits (Kerr, 2001) as a means to fulfilling democratic promise. In the democratic experiment known as higher education, the U.S. seeks to expand education—the great equalizer of any given society—to all.

At the heart of Mexican education is the belief in civic education that attempts to bring national unity. Embedded in Mexico’s primary and secon-

dary curriculum are national standards (arguably, not followed) that focus on a number of activities regulated by the Ministry of Education and other agencies that bring attention to the underpinnings of a democratic nation state. Now, universities attempt to create environments and institutional ambiance to strengthen a democratic and intercultural coexistence.

Although it is justifiable to constrain post-secondary educational studies in a nation's respective context (U.S. and Mexico), often times, researchers limit their investigations to their perceived bounded knowledge. That is to say, many educational researchers only investigate what lies between the confines of their immediate environment. Conversely, one finds bountiful economic, labor, and social ties across boundaries. For example, the interdependence with Mexican trade is very visible and exponential. Etched onto the back of many technological devices (i.e., televisions and car batteries, to name a couple) at Americans' disposal is "Assembled in Mexico".

Beyond economic concerns, ensuring equity in education is an important goal for educators of both countries. Given the increased social stratification in American and Mexican society, equity in educational opportunity and advancement is a paramount concern, especially since the U.S. is inextricably linked to Mexico (e.g., sharing borders and students of Mexican heritage). It is time for educational researchers to permeate boundaries and begin to share knowledge to better inform policies and practice that in the end, affect similar students.

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