Applied Critical Leadership through Latino/a Lenses: An Alternative Approach to Educational Leadership

Liderazgo Crítico Aplicado a través de Lentes Latinas: Un Enfoque Alternativo de Liderazgo Educativo

Liderança Critica Aplicada através da Lens Latinas: Um Abordagem Alternativo do Liderança Educacional

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The aims and objectives of this research were to investigate and better understand ways in which race and gender play out as differences of significant consequence in applied leadership practice. Utilizing qualitative case study methodology coupled with counter-story, a critical race theory approach, the authors analyze data on two Mexican descent educational leaders in the US: one Latino K-6 principal and one Chicana university Dean. Findings indicate evidence supporting positive identity leadership traits as practiced through raced and gender lenses, resulting in effective socially just and equitable leadership outcomes for the participants in the study. These findings are new and particularly relevant as demographic shifts in the US and the world include high numbers of Latino/a and Mexican descent individuals. The strategies employed by participants suggest subaltern ways of educational leadership not previously considered in research and literature. The authors discuss evidence of characteristics supporting applied critical leadership (ACL), an emerging leadership theory, in the leadership practices of the participants. Finally, mainstream implications and guidelines are provided for application in multiple educational leadership contexts.

Keywords: Educational leadership, Culturally responsive leadership, Latino/a school leadership, Applied critical leadership.

El propósito y objetivos de esta investigación fueron investigar y comprender mejor las formas en las que la raza y el género generan importantes consecuencias en la práctica del liderazgo aplicado. Se realiza un estudio de caso cualitativo con contra-historia con un enfoque teórico-crítico sobre raza,. Los autores analizan datos sobre dos líderes educativos de ascendencia mexicana en los EE.UU.: uno director de una escuela K-6 latina y el otro, director de una universidad chicana. Los hallazgos evidencian rasgos de identidad positiva de los líderes que permite la puesta en práctica de un liderazgo equitativo y socialmente justo entre los participantes del estudio. Estos hallazgos son novedosos y especialmente relevantes en EEUU y en el resto de países donde viven un alto número de descendientes de latinos y mexicanos. Las estrategias empleadas por los participantes sugieren alternar formas de liderazgo no consideradas ni en la investigación ni en la literatura. Los autores discuten las evidencias encontradas que definen la teoría emergente del liderazgo crítico aplicado (ACL). Por último, se aportan directrices para su aplicación en diferentes contextos.

Descriptores: Liderazgo educativo, Liderazgo culturalmente sensible, Liderazgo de escuela latina, Liderazgo crítico aplicado.

A finalidade e objetivos desta pesquisa foram investigar e entender melhor as maneiras em que raça e gênero têm implicações importantes para a prática da liderança aplicada. Foi feito um estudo de caso qualitativo com contra-história é com uma abordagem teórica e crítica à raça e gênero. Os autores analisaram dados de dois líderes educacionais de ascendência mexicana em EUA: um director de um K-6 escola latina e no outro, diretor do faculdade chicana. Os resultados mostram traços de identidade positiva de líderes, que permite a implementação de uma liderança justa e socialmente justa entre os participantes do estudo. Estes resultados são novos e particularmente relevante em os EUA e outros países onde vivem um elevado número de descendentes de latinos e mexicanos. As estratégias empregadas pelos participantes sugerem formas alternativas de liderança não considerado ou pesquisa ou literatura. Os autores discutem as evidências encontradas que definem a teoria emergente de liderança crítica aplicada (ACL). Finalmente, orientações para a aplicação em diferentes contextos são fornecidos.

Palavras-chave: Liderança educacional, Liderança culturalmente sensíveis, Liderança da escola latina, Liderança crítica aplicada.

Introduction

Educational leadership as a discipline is increasingly linked to addressing academic and other gaps that persist in schools in the U.S. from Kindergarten classrooms all the way to university settings in higher education (K-HE) (Grogan, 2013). White and sometimes middle class learners, regardless of race, culture, or heritage language, have traditionally attained school success as measured by high school completion, college graduation, and job attainment. Latino/a learners, many of who are Mexican descent but may also is of Central American, South American or Caribbean descent, and most heritage Spanish speakers of these ancestral origins in particular, do not fare as well. Reported and very real disparities in school experiences of a large and growing Latino/a segment of our population warrant closer strengths-based approached inquiries and other innovative research rich applications, before education loses its ability to become "the great equalizer" in the U.S. Like other researchers who conduct their inquiry from a social justice and equity perspective, the authors of this contribution argue that "without participation of individuals of all racial/ethnic backgrounds and genders", we stand to compromise the position of the United States as a global leader in education and other disciplines (Riegle-Crumb & King, 2010:656).

In terms of objectives, our inquiry aims to build upon foundational research reviewing the status and characteristics of women and people of color in educational leadership and administration, responding to the need for a deeper look at potential benefits of diverse leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; McGee Banks, 2007). Although there is a growing body of research on leadership in diverse contexts and leadership toward diversity, there is a lack of empirical research examining the roles race and gender play in leadership practice and very little with regard to potential benefits of diverse leadership as practiced by leaders who are themselves from systemically marginalized or socially excluded backgrounds. Given the prevalence of achievement gap literature in the United States in particular, wherein Latino learners come in last in every academic area as compared to their European descent and Asian peers, an examination of ways in

which leadership with a Latino/a perspective may be effective in these and other leadership contexts, where challenges persist, is clearly warranted.

This article adds to literature on educational leadership for social justice with a fresh perspective, considering the intersectionality of race, gender, and leadership practice. Expanding research with a leadership for social justice and equity focus that often comes out of an etic or outsider's perspective, this contribution brings to the forefront the voices and experiences of Latino/a administrators facing common challenges in education K-HE from an emic, or insider's perspective. Leadership practiced by individuals from historically underrepresented groups who race themselves outside of whiteness (Haney Lopez, 1998), in this case Latino and Chicana both of Mexican descent who have been affected by institutional racism and discriminatory practices as part of their own 'schooling', reveal ways in which their leadership practices are shaped by their lived experiences.

To complement and prepare for this research study, we reviewed literature on transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and critical race (LatCrit) theory in order to better understand the ways in which these intersections play out in the leadership practices of the leaders featured. Using this understanding, we provide evidence for applied critical leadership (ACL), an emergent educational leadership theory that explains ways in which diverse leaders approach educational challenges. In the past, research on educational leadership often suggested there was no difference of significant consequence with regard to race and gender (Bass, 1981). More current findings, however, indicate qualitative differences in leadership practice that are raced and also gendered (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Lloyd-Jones & Jean-Marie, 2011; McGee Banks, 2007; Tillman & Scheurich, 2013). In this contribution, we build upon that premise, focusing on Latino and Chicana perspectives, voices typically absent in academic literature on educational leadership (Alemán, 2009; Méndez-Morse, 2000; Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

Using data from interviews, observations, and institutional documents collected over the course of one year, employing qualitative case study methodology, we examined (1) how the identity (e.g., race, gender, class, culture and perspectives) of Latino/a leaders affect their leadership goals, decisions, and practice; (2) what kinds of effective leadership strategies they use in their daily practice, and (3) in what ways those strategies differ from effective strategies identified in mainstream educational leadership literature. Finally, we compared educational leadership practices against indicators of transformational leadership, LatCrit theory, and critical race theory and sought evidence of ACL in the individuals' leadership practices. In sum, our article provides an alternative to existing leadership theories and models, providing innovative ways to approach promising culturally relevant and appropriate critical leadership for a changing society.

1. Theoretical justification

1.1. Educational leadership promoting Social justice and equity vs. Applied critical leadership (ACL)

The literature on women and people of color in educational leadership is relatively new to the discipline (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 1998; Astin & Leland, 1991; Méndez-Morse, 2000). As recently as 1981, researchers studying more forward thinking models, such as transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and shared leadership, were adamant that race and gender bore no consequence to the way in which educational leadership was practiced (Bass, 1981). While there is a shortage of literature on ways in which race and gender directly affect leadership, namely the leadership practices of women and people of color from their perspectives, there is a growing body of critical work around issues of social justice and equity relating to inequities in educational organizations from the mainstream and therefore etic (or outside) perspectives of scholars, researchers, and advocates who promote equitable educational leadership practices, calling for a reduction of inequitable broad scale educational practices, closure of academic and other gaps in schools, and an end to every other known or conceivable educational inequity being practiced (McKenzie et al., 2008; Normore, 2008; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Skrla & Scheurich, 2003; Tooms & Boske, 2010). Leadership for social justice and educational equity also suggests improved practices for individuals or groups with limited access to education, susceptible to historical oppressions, or societal exclusion based on our country's shared legacies of genocide, slavery, racism, and discrimination. Beyond individuals of African, Latino/a, Native, Asian, and Pacific Island descent, individuals from lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, and queer/questioning groups, individuals with disabilities, and individuals and groups from low socio-economic households are considered disenfranchised, at-risk, and educationally underserved. This advocacy-grounded work is valuable, necessary, and of significant value in addressing educational inequities in our country.

Similarly, McGee Banks' (2007) review of literature on women and people of color in educational leadership reflects the reality of ways in which race and gender impact leadership practice. The review focused on the more positive roles these particular dispositions can have directly from perspectives of raced and gendered individuals, providing insider or emic perspectives from the viewpoint of the individuals or groups in question. This contribution provides another research perspective in subtle, yet significant, contrast to research on educational leadership practices that promote, foster, or work toward social justice and equity. This work, like that of McGee Banks', considers Latino/a men and women, with the express understanding that research on each distinct group warrants its own research agenda. This article continues the emerging academic dialogue on ways in which Latino/a-centric leadership, practiced by men and women, can benefit educational practices for Latino/as and all learners in schools today. Among recent studies that consider this emic or insiders' perspective, researchers seek to pose new questions about educational leadership, provide an alternative to traditional educational research theory, reframe known concepts, and propose an innovative vision of educational leadership (Bordas, 2013; Grogan, 2013; Tillman & Scheurich, 2013).

What makes applied critical leadership (ACL) unique and sets it apart from leadership for social justice and equity is that it values or privileges the raced and gendered experiences of Latino/a educational leaders as resources, or what Luis Moll and associates refer to as "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992:133). These leadership-based 'funds of knowledge' serve to inform, enhance and positively affect relevant and appropriate leadership practices for culturally and linguistically or otherwise diverse individuals. Building on this premise, Hargreaves (2007), a well-known mainstream educational researcher, acknowledges the contemporary need for resourcefulness grounded in renewal, trust, confidence, and appropriate emotional responses to educational dilemmas. ACL practices, grounded in the positive identities of leaders of color, suggests the need for new, fresh, and different leadership practices for the resolution of the most challenging educational issues of our age. This work takes research-based leadership practices and sound educational theories, adding a new twist on seminal ideas.

Based on ACL, we glean much about approaching educational inequities from literature about equitable leadership practices. We stand to learn even more from individuals who are able to apply transformational leadership to disrupt status quo practices and critical pedagogy to challenge assumptions and organizational norms, while, at the same time, choosing to lead assuming a critical race theory lens or perspective. For example, ACL asks leaders to ask themselves questions such as, "In what ways does my identity (i.e., subjectivity, biases, assumptions, race, class, gender, and traditions) interrupt my ability to see other perspectives and therefore provide effective leadership?" (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012:23). In other words, applied critical leaders ask themselves how reflecting on the ways they inherently are, and their individual ways of knowing, may potentially need to be interrupted in order to improve their ability to lead. Rather than just reflect on the question, in this inquiry, applied critical leaders offer an alternative way of leading or a 'counter-story' about effective educational leadership that is different from what we know about effective educational literature from mainstream research and literature (Alemán & Alemán, 2010; Solórzano & Yasso, 2002). Ah Nee-Benham and Cooper (1998) were pioneers of this type of counter-storytelling to alter discourse about effective educational leadership in their contribution featuring the narrative voices of culturally and linguistically diverse women in educational leadership. Similarly, Astin and Leland (1991) sought multiple cross-generational stories of highly effective educational leaders, who were also women, sacrificing personal and professional happiness to meet demands at work and home.

Two seminal studies offer evidence of unique leadership practice that is raced and gendered from a Latino/a worldview (Alemán, 2009; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). Our work builds upon these strong foundations, offering multiple perspectives interrupting, and adding to, academic discourse on educational leadership (Santamaría, 2013; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Without knowing definitively if these patterns are similar for Latino/a leaders as a group, a conclusion about ACL as a leadership paradigm for this subpopulation of educational leaders is unknown and open for further exploration.

In this appreciative inquiry, in the traditions of critical race theory inquiry, we offer a Latino/a counter-story to expand previous research that examines ways in which race and gender impact educational leadership practices for Latino/a leaders K-HE, with particular regard to potentially increasing academic access, achievement, retention, and

support of Latino/a learners at every level (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As the national shortage of Latino/a leaders in educational leadership becomes direr, White males continue to hold the vast number of administrative positions in K-12 and HE institutions (McGee Banks, 2007). Therefore, we investigate ways in which race and gender enhance leadership practice to provide impetus for increased efforts by White males and other mainstream leaders in educational contexts to realize the inherent value and resourcefulness (Hargreaves, 2007) of Latino/a leadership in educational settings as the key to finding innovative solutions for Latino/a learners in U.S. schools at every level.

1.2. Latino/a-centric issues and challenges faced by educational leaders today

1.2.1. Schooling as an issue

Factors that challenge Latino/a students in educational settings in the US, and like countries, run the gamut from less prepared for academic pre-school learning students to consistent high school drop-out rates to issues with persistence in higher education. Inter-group diversity has become an issue for Latino/a descent students whose ancestry can be many different countries with varying levels of English language proficiency, level of generations removed from an immigration experience, languages other than Spanish spoken at home (e.g. Mixteca, Nahatl…), parents' experience with education, and socio-economic status. Previous literature informs the educational leadership community that the largest number and fastest sub-population of Latino/as in the US are Mexican or of Mexican descent. Therefore, we consider two individuals of Mexican descent in this study who, despite academic and societal odds, find themselves successful in education at the top of their careers in educational leadership. Yet they each have stories revealing layer upon layer of institutional–isms that have hindered, and in some cases continue to hinder, each educational leader as they swim like salmon upstream and against the tide, pushing themselves and their organizations toward excellence.

1.2.2. Latinas/Chicanas in educational leadership

In recent years, research indicates there are few women of color in educational administration positions in the United States (Jones & Montenegro, 1982; Méndez-Morse, 2000; Montenegro, 1993; Ortiz, 2000). The educational leader of Mexican descent in this study, who is female, refers to herself as a Chicana. The rarefied Chicana experience is imperative for educational leaders to understand because it reveals a critical leadership experience in higher education that is authentic and transparent. The absence of research featuring Chicana leadership in education is telling. There are few researchers who explore the lives of Latinas, and even fewer still that consider the experiences of these women in educational leadership positions (Méndez-Morse, 2000). Learning about a Chicana application of critical leadership practice will challenge existing stereotypes associated with Latina women and "contribute to expanding the understanding of leadership in general and recognition of the importance of certain leadership abilities" (Méndez-Morse, 2004:561). Informed by this educational leader's path, other educational leaders may learn how to best identify, recruit, and hire Latina educational leaders, as well as ways in which to provide conditions for Latina leaders to thrive.

1.2.3. Latinos/Chicanos in educational leadership

According to Iglesias (2009), the "omission of Latino leadership narratives from educational circles, research journals, and the mainstream media limits educators' ability to understand and develop ways to improve schools and communities for children of color" (p. 1). As a form of practice, a critical examination of the lives of Latino leaders can be instructive, as educators try to deconstruct the success and failure of Latinos in schools, the role of language, and the need to close the achievement gap (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). The instructive power of the Latino administrator narrative, as an example for aspiring educational leaders hoping to have an impact on students' lives, cannot be overstated (Iglesias, 2009). Because they are hard at work and not represented well in research and literature, we do not see them; however, there are many practicing school and district administrators of Latino descent all over the nation. In Iglesias' study, Latinos administrators' identities were created by their personal understandings, cultural influences, and professional experiences within the context of schools, schooling, and educational systems.

Counter-stories, as a part of critical race theory (CRT), are imperative to add to academic discourse in educational leadership, in that the dominant story often told about Latinos is from a subtractive and/or deficit-model (Alemán, 2009; Valencia, 2005). CRT allowed the Latino administrator's narratives to be heard, countering dominant and negative popular notions of Latinos, especially in some educational circles. These newfound voices were able to express themes of language, culture, and race, and engaged in open discussions to promote the lived experiences of Latinos as having a positive impact on their career and career choices (Yosso, 2006).

For example, poverty helped to build character, being bicultural engendered empathy, and academic struggles fostered understanding. In the analysis of Latinos' stories, Latino men drew upon their multiple experiences to navigate past structures and institutions once considered impenetrable. Yosso's (2006) Community Cultural Wealth model demonstrated the 'capitals' required for Latino's to successfully navigate societies/institutional hierarchies. These experiences were categorized in the following ways: aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital, linguistic capital, resistant capital and navigational capital.

A pipeline issue was also found to be of importance for Latino administrators to be. Yosso (2006) asserted that Latinos who were to participate in the education pipeline had to have the proper tools. Tools such as economic capital and wealth may not have been accessible to many Latinos. However, tools such as aspirations, linguistic abilities, familial experiences, and resistant ideologies did help in creating the opportunities for them to fully engage the pipeline. Furthermore, these four capitals helped Latinos expand their tool kit by eventually adding navigational abilities and social capital. Pipeline issues were under the power of outside self-forces. Navigating through and past external forces, such as social institutions, was not a given for many Latinos – it was a skill set learned outside of one's internal dialogue. Exposure to such navigation, without the aid of a mentor, could have been damaging and hurtful to participants' self, career, and aspirations.

From Iglesias' (2009) research findings, mentoring emerges, as does an ambiguous hidden curriculum associated with educational leadership (Magdaleno, 2006). It is apparent that for critical leaders of color, the notion of an additional education is

necessary if these leaders are going to be successful in navigating more subtle aspects of educational leadership that are not colorblind, neutral, subjective, or accessible to aspiring leaders of color who do not have generous, successful, and oftentimes White, mentors.

1.2.4. Applied Critical Leadership as a solution

There is little prior research on educational leaders who are Latino/a and their leadership practice. For example, the role a Latino/a's 'funds of knowledge', and that of particular 'tools' as described by Yosso (2006), is virtually unknown. We do not know to what extent a Latino/a's identity contributes to their ability to lead effectively, increase academic achievement for Latino/a and all learners, or improve other academic outcomes relative to K-12 and HE settings. However, we do know there is at least one alternative educational leadership theory that takes into account the race and gendered experiences of educational leaders who race themselves out of whiteness: applied critical leadership (ACL).

> *Applied critical leadership is the emancipatory practice of choosing to address educational issues and challenges using a critical race perspective to enact context specific change in response to power, domination, access, and achievement imbalances; resulting in improved academic achievement for learners at every academic level of institutional schooling in the U.S.* (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012:34)

Although critical leaders often represent or identify with members of historically underrepresented groups in our country, a critical race theory lens, we assert, is present in other marginalized leaders and fully accessible by all leaders regardless of identity (Santamaría, 2013).

Therefore, according to this premise, it seems likely Latino/a educational leaders might practice leadership that is transformational using critical pedagogical strategies to do so, while providing leadership through a critical raced theoretical lens, thereby practicing ACL. Our disciplined inquiry provides the opportunity to further explore this issue.

2. Methodology and Design

2.1. Data

This study was part of a larger qualitative case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009) informed by a year-long investigation which included interviews, an identity survey, a prompt with interview questions, as well as supporting documents from each participant's educational context. The range of data collected ensured appropriate triangulation of data for the purposes of theory validation as a result of the study. In order to answer the research questions, nine culturally and linguistically diverse educational leaders, kindergarten through higher education in public elementary and high school districts including state supported public universities in Southern California, were queried through interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using grounded theory data analysis methodology. Case studies were developed for each participant. Two of the participants are featured in this study, Julian and Mona, as they self-identified as Mexican-American and Chicana. The other seven participants from the larger case study represented other ethnicities (e.g., Japanese-Okinawan, European, Arabian, and Jewish).

2.2. Participants and data collection

Julian and Mona were practicing educational leaders. Julian was a K-6 elementary school principal in a rural district in Southern California. Mona was the Dean of Graduate Studies and Undergraduate Research at a midsized university in the same city. These participants were selected because they represented a range of Latino/a educational leaders working in academic settings pre-kindergarten through to higher education.

Julian and Mona were considered historically disadvantaged individuals serving in educational leadership roles during the time of this study. Bragg, Kim, and Rubin (2005) defined underserved individuals as those who may have been or may be "financially disadvantaged, racial minorities, and first-generation individuals who are not represented in colleges and universities in proportion to their representation in the K-12 educational system or in society at large" (p. 6). Focusing on these educational leaders served to answer the proposed research questions and contribute knowledge to Latino/a-centric educational leadership as a means of addressing the achievement gap.

Julian and Mona were asked to participate as a function of their position as Latino and Chicana educational leaders of color. They were both affiliated with a doctoral program in educational leadership –Julian as an alumnus and Mona as a former faculty member. Interviews, which took place in participants' school settings, were substantiated by written prompts sent via e-mail. This allowed participants to elaborate on answers over time. Interview transcripts and field note observations were coded along with historical and institutional documents from each participant's school setting.

2.3. Data analysis

We took several major steps in order to analyze the data. First, the raw data were explored in order to develop narrative case studies for each educational leader, using a modified grounded theoretical process based on principles of transformational leadership, evidence of critical pedagogy practice, and application of LatCrit Theory, to corroborate or disavow our original hypothesis for the existence of ACL. Then we sought to determine core characteristics of ACL in order to develop a practice-based model.

The analysis of interviews, observations, and documents relied on thematic analysis and elements of qualitative grounded theory (Bogden & Biklen, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), coupled with a systematic coding procedure described by Glesne (2006) to triangulate the data. Data analysis relied on "a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description" (Glesne, 2006:147). We began by generating numerous codes as we read through responses, identifying data relating to the hypothesized theory grounding critical leadership (Figure 1). We later began focused coding by reviewing initial codes, eliminating the most unrelated responses, combining smaller categories into larger ones and subdividing categories when appropriate. At the subdivision stage, patterns emerged beyond the hypothesized theory that helped us to further organize codes into themes related to the characteristics of critical leadership. These codes roughly associated with categories substantiating critical leadership (see table 1). We identified emergent themes within these categories in addition to classifying, synthesizing, and interpreting data to identify themes that emerged outside of the categories.

Table 1. Theoretical literature frames grounding critical leadership

CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM (May & Sleeter, 2010:10-11)	TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP (Shields, 2010:536)	FUNCTIONS OF LATCRIT THEORY AND CRT (Valdes, 1998:3) (Ladson-Billings, 2009)
Integrates and advances various critical theoretical threads of multicultural education and critical pedagogy.	From traditions of critical race and gender theories, cultural and social reproduction, leadership for social justice.	From traditions of critical pedagogy.
Demonstrates the need to build solidarity across diverse communities.	"To create learning contexts or communities in which social, political, and cultural capital is enhanced to provide equity of opportunity" (p. 572).	The cultivation of community and coalition; the importance of transdisciplinary approaches.
Argues the need to embrace struggles against oppression that others face.	Key values are liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice with emphases on deep equitable change in social conditions.	The advancement of transformation; challenge to dominate ideologies wherein liberalism to be critiqued.
Challenges educators to locate selves and own individual and collective histories, critically and reflectively, and associated power relations.	Involves the deconstruction and reconstruction of social/cultural knowledge frameworks that generate inequity, acknowledgement of power and privilege; as well a critical dialogue between social and individual.	The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, resulting in forms of oppression coupled with commitment to social justice.
Gives priority to structural analysis of unequal power relationships.	Considers power to be positional hegemonic and a tool for oppression as well as action.	The expansion and connection of struggles.
Analyzes the role of institutionalized inequities.	As a starting point, challenges material realities outside of the organization that impinge on success of individuals, groups, and organization as a whole.	The production of knowledge; emphasis on knowledge of people of color being legitimate and crucial to understanding racial subordination with storytelling an important forum for exploring race and racism in society.
Names and challenges racism and other forms of injustice.	Foundations are of critique and promise of "anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, and responsive to class exploitation" practices; leaders of this kind live with tension and challenge as a result of exercising moral courage and activism.	The expansion and connection of struggle(s); the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, resulting in forms of oppression coupled with commitment to social justice.
Culture and identity are multilayered, fluid, complex, and encompass multiple social categories; dynamic conceptualization of culture.	Few direct references to culture and identity.	Emphasis on knowledge of people of color being legitimate and crucial to understanding racial subordination with storytelling an important forum for exploring race and racism in society.

Note: Elaborated by the authors.

We documented whether participants exhibited characteristics of critical leadership evidenced by the application of transformational leadership and practice of critical pedagogy, using the length of critical race theory as defined in table 1. Originally, we categorized evidence of critical leadership into frequency codes (present/non-present), meaning that a participant displayed critical leadership characteristics or that a participant did not. However, these codes were problematic because we hypothesized critical leadership to be an evolving progression, rather than a static or fixed state. In our work, we recognized that individuals began with unique life experiences and biases, and that working towards critical leadership required time and effort of those engaged in the process. Also, we identified that the degree of critical leadership practiced depends on a number of variables not measured or analyzed in this study. As a result, findings from each data source were juxtaposed to determine data saliency, points of convergence and divergence, including ways in which responses differed between individuals.

3. Findings

Findings are presented as excerpts from case studies first and then organized by characteristics of ACL substantiated by findings of a larger subset of women and leaders of color. Second, common critical Latino/a leadership strategies are presented. These are followed by elements of Latino/a ACL, juxtaposed with functions of LatCrit theory.

3.1. Mona's case

Mona is a self-assured Latina woman of Mexican descent who refers to herself as a Chicana. Mona also happens to be one of the four top administrators at a midsized university in Southern California. During quiet times of reflection, she wonders how she became a high ranking educational leader at a university in one of the largest University systems in the country, having worked counter to common stereotypes associated with Latina women in the workplace over the course of 12 years. These looming stereotypes included expectations about the ways in which she related to men, her domestic roles and responsibilities, and perceived limitations for work outside of her home in an educational arena (Andrade, 1982; Méndez-Morse, 2000; Mirandé & Enriquez, 1979). At the same time, and during similar moments, Mona's professional position makes all of the sense in the world. She never aspired to become an educational leader; however, Mona's professional work is grounded by her personal commitment to improve education for students of Mexican descent, as well as other underserved students in the United States of America.

The University where Mona is an administrator has recently been designated a Hispanic serving institution (HIS) per the federal Title V, Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions Program (implemented by the U.S. Department of Education). Mona struggles with being a balanced educational leader, focused on providing effective leadership for all students, while keeping in mind the particular needs of the sociopolitical group with which she shares language, culture, ways of being, and *raza* heritage. She is also preoccupied with the intersectional reality that she is underrepresented by ethnicity and gender in higher education administration. She is one of three Mexican descent administrators at the University and one of 25 in all of the affiliate universities. The statistics for being a woman are even more dismal. Finally, Mona sees herself as female, wife, mother, sister, friend, and colleague before she sees

herself as a university administrator. Balance is tantamount to her ability to lead effectively toward the educational change in which she believes.

Research indicates there are currently few women of color in educational administration positions in the United States (Jones & Montenegro, 1982; Montenegro, 1993; Ortiz, 2000). Mona's case is imperative for educational leaders to understand because it reveals a rarefied critical leadership experience of a Chicana in higher education that is authentic and transparent. The absence of research featuring Latina leadership in education is telling. There are few researchers who explore the lives of Latinas, and even fewer still that consider the experiences of these women in educational leadership positions (Méndez-Morse, 2000). Learning about her application of critical leadership practice will "contribute to expanding the understanding of leadership in general and recognition of the importance of certain leadership abilities" (Méndez-Morse, 2004: 561). Mona's case addresses this exclusion and provides an example of critical leadership through a race-gendered lens. Her case makes accessible a Chicana perspective and the way in which it plays out at a high leadership level in higher education. This case adds to and informs critical images of leadership. By way of Mona's path, educational leaders can learn how to best identify, recruit, and hire educational leaders, as well as ways in which to provide conditions for leaders of color to thrive.

3.2. Julian's case

After four years as the principal of an elementary school in Program Improvement serving mostly English language learners in rural Southern California, Julian learns that his school is closing due to district restructuring and budget cuts, despite steady gains being made by the teachers and students. During his tenure, Julian has overcome negative institutional racism targeting Mexican descent families, inaccurate teacher and community perceptions related to his age, qualifications, and experience, and had a positive effect on the school culture resulting in improved standardized assessment scores. As a result of the school's closure, Julian has been relocated to another elementary school in the district. In the meantime, he has been charged to bring the school year to a graceful end. This case depicts applied critical leadership during turbulent educational times for a young Latino principal, and the students, teachers, staff and parents participating in a viable learning community in the midst of district reconstruction.

Findings definitively indicate Julian and Mona practice transformational leadership and applied critical pedagogy as viewed through the lens of critical race theory. The data also reveal evidence and characteristics of critical leadership and strategies used by critical leaders to inspire and inform this practice for other leaders in education.

3.3. Characteristics of applied critical leadership

Below is a brief report summarizing common characteristics, which presented themselves as common emergent themes for Julian and Mona (and for all of our participants) during data analysis. The following themes or characteristics exhibited by critical leaders are indicative of critical leadership as substantiated by prevalence for each leader, beyond Julian and Mona, who were part of the larger study (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

Critical leaders are **willing to initiate and engage in critical conversations** with individuals and groups even when the topic is not popular for the greater good of the

whole group (e.g., ageism, institutional racism, affirmative action, LGBTQ issues). As indicated by Julian in his case, these conversations are often data driven with K-6 teachers becoming empowered with the knowledge that comes with disaggregated data. Mona has become an expert at leading critical conversation in large groups. This is appropriate and needed at all levels, but especially in higher education.

Critical leaders who are not from historically marginalized groups **can and sometimes choose to assume a CRT lens** in order to consider multiple perspectives of critical issues. Julian and Mona both mentioned this phenomenon in reference to white and international allies in the workplace. Additionally, they often **use consensus building as the preferred strategy for decision-making**. While working toward consensus, the notion of interest convergence is sometimes the goal, wherein the solution will benefit one or more oppressed groups, as well as members of the mainstream.

Julian and Mona, and other critical leaders of color, were particularly **conscious of "stereotype threat" or fulfilling negative stereotypes in their cases associated with Latino/as** and worked hard to dispel negative stereotypes for Latino/as. In her case, Mona shared ways in which she worked to counter common negative stereotypes in higher education. This was accomplished by her ability to tap into positive attributes of her Chicana, female, and person of color identities for application within her leadership practice. Julian and Mona as individuals felt the need to **make empirical contributions and thus add authentic research based information to academic discourse regarding Latino/as**. This was evidenced by both educational leaders' current or past participation in doctoral programs of study and other affiliations in academia (e.g. publishing articles, teaching at the university, presenting at conferences, etc.).

Critical leaders feel the **need to honor all members of their constituencies** (e.g. staff, parents, community members). Julian and Mona sought out and wanted to include voices and perspectives of traditionally silenced groups and individuals (e.g. Spanish-speaking parents of English language learners, students, etc.). Julian and Mona **lead by example to meet an unresolved educational need or challenge**. They both lead in order to give back to the Latino/a community with which they identify and that also served to support their own academic journeys. These leaders feel it is their responsibility to bring critical issues with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, and class to their constituents for resolution. Critical leaders feel that if they do not address issues around race, language, and power, difficult issues will not be brought to surface.

Critical leaders feel the **need to build trust when working with mainstream constituents or partners or others who do not share an affinity toward issues related to educational equity**. Julian and Mona felt the need to 'win' the trust of individuals in the mainstream, as well as the need to 'prove' themselves qualified and worthy of leadership positions. Both Julian and Mona felt "called" to lead. They lead by what they called "spirit" or practice, a variation of servant leadership. Related to this idea, both leaders featured in this inquiry **can be classified as transformative, servant leaders who work ultimately to serve the greater good**.

3.3.1. Common critical Latino/a leadership strategies across cases

Table 2 below illustrates the particular strategies each Latino/a critical leader employed. The strategies are organized using the hypothesized, and now confirmed, tenets of critical leadership: indicators of transformative leadership (TL), the practice of

critical pedagogy (CP), and the use of a critical race perspective (CRP), which comprises a blend of critical race theory and LatCrit theory. A fourth category emerged when analyzing data with the hypothesized characteristics at the forefront: spirit. In the figure below, spirit emerges with regard to particular strategies.

Table 2. ACL Strategies for Julian and Mona

LEADER, LEVEL, AND IDENTITY	STRATEGIES INDICATIVE OF CRITICAL LEADERSHIP: TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP (TL), PRACTICE OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY (CP), AND USE OF CRITICAL RACE PERSPECTIVE (CRP) (INCLUDING LATCRIT THEORY)
Julian (K-6 Principal), Latino of Mexican descent, Male	Strictly followed moral and emotional compass stressing trust and integrity. (TL) Assumed critical pedagogy and a belief that education is equal to empowerment. (CP) Questioned how identity interrupted or enhanced ability to see alternative perspectives. (CRP) Deliberately relational with his teachers and staff. (TL) Looked to research-based culturally responsive teaching practices as focus of professional development program. (CP) Instituted multiple team visits to school sites with similar populations experiencing positive academic growth to create idea ownership with teachers. (TL) Referred to culture, language, and race data first when addressing academic issues. (CRP) Used data to teach his teachers how to distinguish between groups, sub groups, goals, etc. (TL) Met regularly with each teacher and staff member individually. (TL)
Mona (HE Dean of Under graduate research), Chicana, Female	Publicly countered false assumptions about Latina women of Mexican descent in word and action. (CRP) Focused on improving educational outcomes for Latino children of Mexican descent, regardless of position and education. (CP) Carved and created her own Path of leadership development based on a composite of different qualities and behaviors (Herrera, 1987, p. 21). (TL, CRP) Increased campus awareness of Latino enrollment issues. (CRP, TL) Encouraged experimentation and creation of adopting promising practices. (TL, CP) Pursued aggressive recruitment to create an improved plan for retention and persistence of underserved students. (CRP, TL) Creating conditions to increase cultural competency for faculty working with diverse student populations. (CRP, TL) Strove to be a balanced educational leader attending diversity trainings to learn about populations with whom she had little experience. (CRP) Encouraged constituents to practice balance. (Spirit) Practiced transparency, collaboration, and consultation. (TL) Practiced forgiveness and gave constituents the benefit of the doubt. (TL, Spirit)

Note: Elaborated by the authors.

Worth noting, Julian and Mona describe the need to assume multiple identities when working among different groups (e.g. language, dialect, body language, outward appearance), as well as act as "bridges" in order to facilitate communication between divergent groups. Lastly, they regularly perceive crises as opportunities.

Apart from the larger sample, and particular to Julian and Mona as Latino and Chicana critical leaders, five core elements of applied critical leadership were shared that align with functions of LatCrit theory (Valdes, 1998) that might suggest a sub-division of Latino/a applied critical leadership (LatACL) to better describe critical leadership in

these cases. These elements found in Julian and Mona include: lack of leadership guidance or scaffolding, spiritual aspects of leadership practice, importance of family, the use of data in order to make decisions, and the conceptualization of a positive identity. Table 3 illustrates ways in which these elements compare to the functions of LatCrit theory.

Table 3. Elements of LatACL and functions of LatCrit theory

ELEMENT FROM DATA	FUNCTIONS OF LATCRIT THEORY (Valdes, 1998:3)	JULIAN	MONA
Lack of Leadership Guidance.	The expansion and connection of struggle(s).	Lack of role models.	Lack of mentors.
Spiritual Leadership.	The advancement of transformation.	Moral/Emotional Leadership/Compass Leads with Character and Integrity	Open Heart, Generous of Spirit, Acts with Grace.
Importance of Family.	The expansion and connection of struggle(s).	Father as his role model who taught him "intrinsic" leadership skills, leadership is not context-specific.	Parents and Family activists in Raza movement.
Use of Data to drive decision-making.	The production of knowledge.	Improving teaching practices to be more culturally responsive.	Reversing negative stereotypes associated with Mexican descent women.
Positive Identity.	The cultivation of community and coalition.	Staying positive, finding solutions to problems, building bridges and opening doors are ways, he believes, that will lead to more effective organizational, people-based systems.	Positive, strengths-based to improve perceptions of Latinos on campus, students and faculty.

Note: Elaborated by the authors.

With reference to positive identity or cultivation of community and coalition, Julian states, "No matter what other people perceive, I know that I am the type of leader I want to be, that I am making a positive impact on those around me, that I am fostering positive school culture, and that I am supporting others to reach their own potential." Similarly, when reflecting on ways in which her identity impacts her leadership practice, Mona shares, "I struggle with being a balanced educational leader focused on providing effective leadership for all students while keeping in mind the particular needs of Latino/as and Chicano/as with which I share language, culture, and ways of being."

4. Discussion and implications

Contrary to mainstream leadership paradigms and practices that focus on detachment, objectivity, and a compartmentalized leadership practice, Latino/a critical leaders blend traditional leadership practice with their personal and professional 'funds of knowledge' rooted in their raced and gendered realities and experiences with schooling and then apply that hybridized knowledge to their leadership practice. As a result, the ways in which they lead from their interactions with parents and community members to decision making and budgeting, are qualitatively different from existing leadership models provided by literature in educational leadership.

When asked questions on how identity impacts leadership practice for Latino/a leaders, the participants in this study provided explicit, tangible strategies that offered

leadership solutions for everyday challenges plaguing schools in the U.S. today. Julian and Mona show us that it is not enough to recruit, hire, and support leaders of color for administrative positions in education. Educational leaders who find themselves in situations where status quo practices need to be changed; need to be able to identify educational leaders who are able to use and apply a combination of sound traditional leadership practices (e.g. transformational leadership). They also need to mindful of and to apply their practice through more critical lenses, such as critical pedagogy, critical race theory or LatCrit theory, as in the case of Julian and Mona. Educational leaders in the highest positions are cautioned with this important detail.

Findings from this study suggest that it is important to emphasize that, beyond opportunities for recruitment and hiring, Latino/a critical leaders, as do all women and leaders of color, need support in order to thrive and provide sustainable leadership practice. The research suggests these supports include conditions created to allow for more than one Latino/a in educational settings to be hired at a time. Trust must be overtly communicated, especially in mainstream contexts. Resources need to be made available to ensure Latino/a educational leaders receive the support they need to co-exist in a mainstream professional environment. All professional staff, including Latino/a critical leaders, must have diversity training in cultural competence, provided with scheduled refreshers, as current leadership preparation programs and professional development leave educators unprepared to serve culturally and linguistically diverse students (Scanlan & López, 2012). Efforts for Latino/a leaders to attain higher levels of education should be supported. Current leadership needs to be willing to mentor or seek out mentors or professional development for Latino/a individuals who express the need for more training. Referring to the California Association of Latino School Administrators (CALSA), Magdaleno (2010) discussed the importance of mentoring for Latino/a school leaders as a means to build cultural capital that draws upon the values of family, respect, service, humility, and care that are unique to Latino/a culture. Developing networks to sustain mentoring opportunities to support new Latino/a leaders results in an increased number of positive role models for Latino/a youth, can "help build and maintain high self-esteem for Latina and Latino students" (p. 94), and can inspire more Latino/a teachers to consider and enter into leadership positions.

Our analysis indicate that remaining successful or persisting at success will only occur when Latino/a critical leaders are not isolated in their dispositions and propensities to lead regarding issues of race, ethnicity, language, and class, which are usually at the forefront of their leadership practice. Organizations with leadership that choose to be more purposeful about recruiting, hiring, and retaining Latino/a critical leaders need to develop plans to hire cadres or groups of Latino/a critical leaders, if they expect critical shifts and changes to occur in their organizations. Professional development, mentoring opportunities, and access to the 'hidden curriculum' of the organizations need to be made transparent so that Latino/a critical leaders feel supported in the workplace. Finally, critical leaders, especially those of color, should be aware of, and be included in, diversity training and support for the good of the organization. They should not bear the burden of training others simply because of their background. Nor should it be assumed they know any more about working in diverse settings than their mainstream peers. A diverse life experience may yield empathy, but knowledge of other cultures and cultural competency needs to be supported by professional development (Santamaría, 2013).

5. Conclusions

The Latino/a critical leaders featured in this research do not opt to trade their marginalized identities for hegemonic perspectives. They are grounded in their identities and able to identify ways in which their cultural identities affect their leadership practice. What participants shared with us is that, to some degree, their ability to lead organizations successfully comes directly as a result of their unique difference. Rather than suppress their identities, biases, linguistic ability, ambiguity, and multiple perspectives, Latino/a critical leaders use their "ways of knowing" to inform important leadership decisions in education at every level.

Further work is needed to shed light on further benefits of diverse leadership in educational contexts. Our results clearly indicate the existence of Latino/a leaders who are traditionally qualified and uniquely experientially culturally and linguistically equipped to provide leadership in situations that our system has found perplexing. Critical leaders, Latino/a or otherwise raced outside of whiteness, are able to provide counter-stories and therefore counter-solutions to educational challenges.

Like most studies, ours has its limitations. These limitations include the sample size two Latino/a educational leaders can only provide a limited perspective. Additionally, the two individuals represented a convenience sample that participated in the study voluntarily. The study geographically was limited to Southern California and may be subject to researcher bias as we are raced and gendered leaders of color ourselves. However, it is important to note we would not have been able to collect such detailed data, were it not for our case study research design.

Further, Latino/a critical leaders who participated in this study do not conform to mainstream leadership practice, but engage in practices parallel to known mainstream leadership paradigms. Latino/a critical leaders exhibit fresh, innovative ways of leading to meet increasingly challenging needs and choose change as their primary leadership outcome, based on their adaptive experiences, rather than waiting to react to a failing system. These leaders also express a moral and ethical obligation to lead, being 'called' to serve in a leadership capacity. They each demonstrate a strong worth ethic, and are extremely well prepared and educated with regard to being able to provide effective leadership. Furthermore, the leaders are committed to educational change for what they consider to be the greater good, using positive attributes of their Latino/a identities to inform their leadership practice.

In sum, knowledge and resourcefulness held by Latino/a critical leaders are virtually untapped and constrained by traditional ways of thinking about who the best, qualified individuals are for leadership positions. These research findings indicate they offer fresh new ideas to address old persistent problems. Therefore, educational leadership in the U.S. at the highest levels needs to "reset" its approach to recruiting, hiring, and developing educational leaders; otherwise missed opportunities will persist with regard to solving contemporary educational crises, including academic and other achievement gaps separating Latino/a youth from their mainstream, most often white and middle-class, peers. It is critical we aggressively attract, recruit, train, and hire Latino/a educational leaders and other leaders of color to work as equal partners in solving our collective educational crises.

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