Counterstories of TRiO Latino students at a Northern Community College: Transfer Culture and Leadership

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of transfer-bound Latino students currently participating in TRIO SSS to identify factors hindering or facilitating a transfer culture.
Problem Statement

Too few Latino students are transferring to four-year institutions
Adapted from EdSource, 2008
100 Latina/o First Time College Students

- 8 University of California
- 75 California Community College
- 17 California State University

7 Transfer

- 1 University of California
- 6 California State University
Research Questions

1. How does participation in the TRIO SSS program influence advocacy of leadership at a community college?

2. What are the Latino students’ perceptions of success while preparing to transfer to four-year institutions?

3. How does the TRIO SSS program contribute to establishing a transfer culture for Latino students?

4. How has TRIO SSS shaped the experiences for Latino students at a community college?
Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT):
• CRT is committed to social justice and offers a transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991)
• A social justice agenda to eliminate racism, sexism, and poverty and to empower Students of Color (Freire, 1970, 1973; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, 2002).

Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit):
• Is an extension of CRT to further address issues often ignore by CRT such as ethnicity, culture, identity, immigration, phenotype and sexuality (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001)
Community Culture Wealth (CCW):
It acknowledges and legitimizes the unrecognized assets that Latinos bring from their homes and communities into the institutions (Yosso, 2005).
Theoretical Framework

Transformative Leadership Theory:

- Deconstructs and reconstructs social/cultural knowledge frameworks that generate inequality, acknowledgement of power and privilege; dialectic between individual and social.
- Requires moral courage and activism for liberation, democracy, equity, and justice (Shields, 2009, 2010)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transformational</th>
<th>Transformative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starting Point</strong></td>
<td>Need for the organization to run smoothly and efficiently</td>
<td>Material realities and disparities outside the organization that impinge on the success of individuals, groups, and organization as a whole</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation</strong></td>
<td>Meet the ends of complex and diverse systems</td>
<td>Critique and promise</td>
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<td><strong>Emphasis</strong></td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Deep and equitable change in social conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Processes</strong></td>
<td>Understanding of organizational culture; setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program</td>
<td>Deconstruction and reconstruction of social/ cultural knowledge frameworks that generate inequality, acknowledgement of power and privilege; dialectic between individual and social</td>
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<td><strong>Key Values</strong></td>
<td>Liberty, justice, equality</td>
<td>Liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice</td>
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<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>Organizational change; effectiveness</td>
<td>Individual, organizational, and societal transformation</td>
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<td><strong>Power</strong></td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>Positional, hegemonic, tool for oppression as well as for action</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Leader</strong></td>
<td>Looks for motive, develops common purpose, focuses on organizational goals</td>
<td>Lives with tension and challenge; requires moral courage, activism</td>
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<td><strong>Related Theories</strong></td>
<td>School effectiveness, school reform, school improvement, instructional leadership</td>
<td>Critical theories (race and gender), cultural and social reproduction, leadership for social justice</td>
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Methodology

Research Design:

• Qualitative phenomenological study was used to describe the experiences of Latino students in a TRIO SSS program

• CRT methodology of counterstorytelling was deployed to bring the student experiences to the center of the analysis.
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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>U.S.-born</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Overall GPA</th>
<th>Transfer School</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Hrs Per wk</th>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Viticulture &amp; Enology</td>
<td>3.24</td>
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Sample

- Purposeful sampling criterion was used
- Target Sample was 10 students at least in their second year as TRIO participants, at least 18 years of age, five females & five males, self-identified as Latinos and transfer-bound
- In the end, only nine TRIO SSS participants agreed to be interviewed, seven females & two males
Discovery of Emergent Themes

- Cultivating access
- Mentorship relationships
- Support and Hindrances
- Fostering Transfer mentality
- Meaningful Learning experience
**Cultivating Access**

- Always encourage us to participate in events where we help other freshman, this year when they have their gathering during the summer they encourage us to come out and give advice, information and speak about SSS. This has definitely given me more confidence. (Monica)

- He’s always reminding us of opportunities, there’s this and this going on, you should go, and you’ll really benefit from it. Let’s say there are speakers that come from the universities, that display Chicano’s story, how they succeeded. For me he always uses Berkeley because he knows that I want to go there, really motivating us and telling us we can do it and to believe in ourselves. Without that I don’t think I could have done it. I am just so thankful --- I don’t know how to explain it. It’s as though they’re your family. (Elizabeth)

- Once I joined SSS, I got into CHAC, The Chicano Hispanic American Club. So I started getting into that and I did every major event that they did like Dias de los muertos, cinco de mayo, they do fundraisers and make baskets for Thanksgiving for families who didn’t have money to buy a turkey. I noticed that I started getting involved because people from SSS were inviting me to different clubs, come and check out this club, come over here, will show you, will help you. (Lorena)

- They have tutoring programs, I was lucky enough that on my first semester I was coming to the tutoring sessions and by the second semester I was a tutor for the program. Unfortunately, I had to work more and so I couldn’t continue with that, the tutoring. (Manuel)
Mentorship Relationships

✓ I remember when I first had my meeting with my advisor to go over my ED plan and I told him, you know what? You remind me so much of my dad. My advisor reminds me so much of him because he is the one who pushes me. The way he talks to me about education, the way that he explains it. Since my dad didn’t have the opportunity to go to university or college, he pushes us and he is strict but it’s not like you have to do it but its more like okay if you want to succeed you have to do this. That’s how my advisor was and I went to my dad laughing and told him, he’s exactly like you. I feel like my dad is my counselor but that’s good you know because I needed here too [home]. (Lorena)

✓ With my advisor, we not only talk about what courses we have to take, we talk about career goals and what school best fits me and especially what I’m looking for. He gets me pumped up and gets him pumped up and he gets pumped up too so it bounces back and forth. (Manuel)

✓ He has definitely supported me continuously by emailing me events or information about UC’s. I remember my first semester at the community college he would constantly contact me on the phone asking to meet up and about school and how were my classes. Just to meet up and to keep him updated with everything. Various times I was hesitant because I wasn’t sure why someone wanted to meet with me so much but now I realize he was just trying to help. Try to get to learn you more, help you transfer, to figure out what’s right with you. (Monica)
Family Strength

✓ Self-respect is the thing that’s helped me succeed because my mom always said that I needed to respect myself and for others to respect you. I know that’s really true because I know people who don’t respect themselves and other people don’t respect them and they just crashed down. (Elizabeth)

✓ Both of my parents are very hard workers. That’s deep rooted within me, bestowed upon me. Just as having them as examples that they could achieve in such a short amount of time without knowing the language, the city, and not knowing the people. That’s something that has showed me that hard work pays off. (Manuel)

✓ My parents have always told me to never give up, to achieve for the greatest, and that’s what I’ve brought in myself when joining SSS. Even though at times it’s hard, I may be tired, I have headaches, I don’t want to do this; sometimes I even do think about giving up. I tell myself no, I have to do it, I have to suck it up and that I can do it. (Lorena)

✓ My parents have always taught me that if you really want something you have to work for it and you’re not going to get it right away. You have to take the stairs, you are not going to just go in the elevator and go up there. (Irma)

✓ My cultural values and traditions from my parents of always working hard, and reaching what you want to reach, and what you pushing to get to where you want to be. It is always at the front of my mind and it is something that pushes me. (Carolina)
In elementary school they [counselors] put me in ELD, which is English Language Development or something like that but I didn’t need to be in that class, I really didn’t! I felt like I was put in there because I was Mexican. It was in elementary too, they gave a lot of people of color ELD and I didn’t think that was fair because I knew that I didn’t belong there. (Jose)

Growing up in Saint Helena, you were either you a White American or Spanish Mexican. I did really good in math that was the only thing I was good at there would be only three Mexican students and then the rest were White. And you were a rare breed in the mix that you were good at something and I kind of felt like I didn’t belong there because I was Mexican. (Monica)

Every time I went to a counselors office there was always an Asian or White person and for me, what about my race? I just noticed it with my race, it made me feel like as if they knew, we wouldn’t go anywhere in life. They didn’t believe in us, just in them, like they’re the ones that are going to succeed so let’s focus on them and not on us. It made me feel almost like I couldn’t do it, like I was going to be nothing. (Elizabeth)
More Challenges

 ✓ Middle school and high school teachers didn’t really seem to care they just wanted us to pass our class and get out. That’s how it seemed to me. They just wanted us to graduate and not even the counselors, they weren’t very helpful at all. At Napa High the counselors would never want to talk to us. They never told us good job or that we should go to college, nothing. I didn’t hear it one time, not from Napa High or Armijo where I graduated.

 ✓ My counselor was super air headed; I was like why is she counseling people to try to further their education? Sometimes what they would do was they would help the students that they knew would go farther. They would look at their grades and ask them to think about going to college. With me, because my grades weren’t reflecting, I never got that said to me. (Janet)

 ✓ I heard about the practice SAT’s through a friend. Maybe I’ll just do that, but I’m not sure what it does, but sure I took the Practice SAT and in fact, I did really well on it but I didn’t know what it was for, so I actually didn’t take the SATs. My senior year everyone was applying to colleges and ask me what my score was and I didn’t have one so I went and took the ACT’s instead. (Manuel)
Foster Transfer Mentality

✓ My advisor has helped me in so much and so many ways, last semester he told me that I could apply to transfer and I was like oh really! I was surprised! and then he told me my overall GPA, which is a 3.9. I was so excited and happy and then he told me there was an opportunity at Berkeley to take a free class over the summer so I was so excited, oh yeah I’ll take it. (Liz)

✓ Various times I was hesitant because I wasn’t sure why someone wanted to meet with me so much but now I realize he was just trying to help. Try to get to learn you more, help you transfer, to figure out what’s right with you. What I’ve heard from other students from in SSS, my counselor vs. their counselor, I feel like my advisor was very consistent in being there. Very consistent in trying to say that he is there for us. (Monica)

✓ They also take us on field trips. I actually like the field trips because I like roaming around campus and seeing and knowing the spots. So they say to ask myself if I can see myself there. Ask yourself and see if you see yourself been there. You really have to visit the school because it’s going to be a part of your home, where you’re going to be for the majority of the day, so it’s important to figure out it you can see yourself there, walking through the classrooms the scenery, everything. (Jose)

✓ They have. With my counselor, at first I wasn’t sure if I wanted to transfer, I just wanted to get my AA from here but he told me it was a great opportunity to be the first one out of my family. He goes with me through each step. (Irma)
Meaningful Learning Experience

✓ Through the SSS program, that has been the most beneficial program that I have been a part of. Coming into the community college I didn’t know anything. I didn’t know anything about the college in the first place, what do I do, how do I register for classes, like or that kind of thing. Through SSS you learn about the transferring application, how to fill it properly, you learn about internships (Manuel)

✓ Being in this program has led me to inform me about everything. My mom doesn’t know much about transferring. My sisters don’t know & it’s the information I have gotten from SSS has giving me, is what has made me realize I can do it, but sometimes I feel like how about I go and I don’t make it (Irma)

✓ They’ve helped a lot because they have resources and so they can appoint you to somebody at certain colleges that you can go talk to. The people help you further stuff that you’re unsure about. You have a connection from campus to campus and you’re not going by yourself. (Janet)

✓ The way they open their doors is amazing. I know for me coming into college I was lost, knowing about the program through my sister it was good form me. Since then they have provided a lot of opportunities for me. (Jose)
Findings

Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth: Familial, Social, Aspirational, Linguistic, Resistant & Navigational

Hindrances
- Exclusion
- Negative experience
- Financial difficulties
- Fear of Moving on

Support System
- Family Self-Awareness Positive experiences

TRIO SSS Support
- Cultivating access
- Mentorship relationship
- Foster transfer mentality
- Parent-transfer connection

Transfer-Climate-Transformative Outcome
- Options
- Transfer
- Access
- Leadership

Meaningful Learning
- Positive emotions

Institutional Barrier: Deficit Thinking
Conclusions

• Latino experiences in TRIO SSS illuminated various strategies that cultivated an environment advocating for personal growth and empowering students to achieve their goals
• TRIO advisors provided transfer knowledge in a caring, nurturing, and meaningful manner
• Major challenges came from K-12 experiences
• The study shed light on the importance of having their TRIO advisors as gatekeepers of opportunity for this Latino population
Implications for Further Study

• Further research needs to be conducted to compare and contrast the Latino experience transfer success from both, the institutional transfer practice and TRIO SSS

• The total number of males participating in the TRIO SSS program was significant low versus their female counterparts. This gender gap coincides with existing literature that the future of Latino male student population is at risk. Latino male representation in college and attaining degrees continues to decline relative to their female peers (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).
Thank You!