Education Policy Implementation in the New Latino Diaspora

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Education Policy Implementation in the New Latino Diaspora

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Villages, towns, and cities throughout the United States, including the 41 states of the New Latino Diaspora (NLD), continue to host/receive heterogeneous populations of Latinos who transform the physical and cultural landscape in ways that require social institutions, like schools and universities, to respond. Increasingly, this transformation includes newcomer parents starting families. Thirty-three percent of the U.S. Hispanic population is age 18 or younger, while that age profile is true of slightly below 20% of non-Hispanic Whites (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). While voter rolls and retirement community residents may remain much Whiter than the U.S. population as a whole for a number of decades, school enrollment will be increasingly Latino.

Table 1 shows the 22 NLD states where Latinos constitute at least 10% of the age 18 or younger population (as of 2011). It also highlights that in only one of those states, Maryland, is more than half of the Latino population (51%) foreign-born, although in seven more than 40% of the Latino population was not U.S.-born. We share these numbers because they clarify the underlying demography, including demographic shifts, that compels educational institutions to respond to this portion of their enrollment.

**Table 1.** New Latino Diaspora States with Hispanics Constituting at Least 10% of the 18-and-Under Population (also shows Total Hispanic Population and Portion of Hispanic Population That Was Foreign-Born), 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Hispanic Population</th>
<th>Percentage of 18-and-Under Population that is Hispanic</th>
<th>Percentage of Hispanic Population that is Foreign-Born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>738,000</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>466,000</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>135,000</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>790,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>373,000</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>307,000</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho</td>
<td>182,000</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>174,000</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>650,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>347,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>126,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>52,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>828,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>494,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>880,000</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>489,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>649,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>397,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>344,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The seven preceding chapters all illustrate how various educational institutions in the NLD have addressed various goals for various Latino populations. Each response, whether a formal policy (like that addressed by Lowenhaupt), a partnership (like those described by Gallo, Wortham, and Bennett and Richardson Bruna), an inquiry into how the accumulation of policies have shaped teacher beliefs (as in Contreras, Stritikus, Torres, & O’Reilly Diaz and Adair), or something as modest as a university course with a travel study component (Sawyer) embeds and transmits varying ideologies about who Latinos are, how we/they are or are not imagined as part of the community, and what we/they are assumed to need. These responses are all, on varying scales, policies that seek to reform a certain aspect of the educational experience in the NLD. In practically all of these cases although Latinos are the objects of policy implementation, they are not key architects of it. The BESITOS program described by Herrera and Holmes stands out as an exception on this account.

The authors of these seven chapters remind us that community responses to Latinos are neither unilateral nor unidirectional. Nor are they ever fully implemented in accordance with the ideals by which they were conceived. Rather, actual responses—the praxis of education in the NLD—depends on the comprehension and conviction of those who mediate the conversion of policies into practice. With cases spanning the country from Washington State to Tennessee, collectively the authors of this section of the book illuminate both the range and nuance of educational policy implementation within the NLD.

1. Chapters 10–16 of Revisiting Education in the New Latino Diaspora, ed. E. T. Hamann, S.E.F. Wortham, & E. G. Murillo (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2015); as follows:
   10 Teacher Perceptions, Practices, and Expectations Conveyed to Latino Students and Families in Washington State, by Frances Contreras, Tom Stritikus, Kathryn Torres, and Karen O’Reilly Diaz;
   11 Early Childhood Education and Barriers Between Immigrant Parents and Teachers Within the New Latina(o) Diaspora, by Jennifer K. Adair;
   12 The 3 Rs: Rhetoric, Recruitment, and Retention, by Socorro G. Herrera and Melissa A. Holmes;
   13 Bilingual Education Policy in Wisconsin’s New Latino Diaspora, by Rebecca Lowenhaupt;
   14 Increasing “Parent Involvement” in the New Latino Diaspora, by Sarah Gallo, Stanton Wortham, and Ian Bennett;
   15 Professional Development Across Borders: Binational Teacher Exchanges in the New Latino Diaspora, by Adam Sawyer;
   16 The Iowa Administrators’ and Educators’ Immersion Experience: Transcultural Sensitivity, Transhumanization, and the Global Soul, by Katherine Richardson Bruna.
Levinson and Sutton (2001) write that policy is always appropriated by practitioners and intermediaries; it is the creative way through which, “agents ‘take in’ elements of policy, thereby incorporating these discursive and institutional resources into their own schemes of interest, motivation, and action” (p. 3). The myriad voices that are captured by the authors of this section, ranging from students and parents to teachers, administrators, and state policymakers (as well as the chapter authors themselves), remind us that policy appropriation happens by many means simultaneously. The dialogic nature of policy is exponential and interconnected: it is appropriated individually by stakeholders on a microlevel, but as it is executed these appropriations come into dialogues with each other and construct a complex interplay of conceptions and action, each in varying degrees of accord ance (or fidelity) to the original ideas. The authors in this section invite us to enter into the dialogic space of policy appropriation within the context of the NLD.

Our summation/reaction looks at the dialogues that are happening in each of the seven chapters within this section. Then, we put the chapters in dialogue with each other to shed light on emergent themes. It is this intersection of dialogues in which readers are invited to engage in order to convert findings into educational practices, policies, research, and/or cautionary tales. Table 1 showed how numerous and geographically widespread is the rising generation of Latinos in the NLD, but on their own numbers do not illuminate the heterogeneity — by age, origin, (im)permanence, community history, and so forth — that frames the varying experiences of NLD Latinos in educational settings. As Hamann and Harklau (2010) insisted in the Handbook on Latinos and Education chapter that was adapted to start this volume, the time for surprise and improvisational response to Latinos in NLD educational settings is over. Latino students constitute a large and growing proportion of enrollments from New England to the Great Plains, from the Deep South to the Pacific Northwest. Collectively, they are not being served as well by schools as the population they are replacing. The chapters analyzed not only shed varying insights into why or how this has been so, they collectively offer an in sistent voice: From now on, it needs to be better. Fortunately, a cross-chapter analysis suggests some ways for this to become so.
The Dialogues of Different Stakeholders

Throughout these seven chapters, we are reminded that educational institutions encompass and configure multiple stakeholders of various backgrounds who interact with policies, practices, and each other, resulting in a complex and intriguing dialogue that shapes the cultural context of the educational space. Inevitably, the heterogeneity (Wortham & Rhodes, this volume) of the NLD and of these accounts (ranging from early childhood to higher education) is both a starting point and a caution; while there may be a shared imperative for “getting education right” for Latinos in the NLD; there is not a single pathway for realizing this goal. The authors of these seven chapters have presented research that highlights how different stakeholders within these communities co-construct and interact with the educational infrastructure. They shed light on what different stakeholders deem to be an appropriate educational response to meet the needs and aspirations of Latino students and their families. This is exhibited through the policies that are drawn up by Departments of Education and school administrators and through the process by which these policies are understood, adapted or ignored, and acted upon.

Loewenhaupt’s chapter on the Bilingual Education Policy in Wisconsin is the most straightforward analysis in this collection of a statewide policy being put into practice. She follows up on Wisconsin’s mandate for schools to establish “Bilingual-Bicultural” programs by surveying principals statewide to illustrate how the policy has been appropriated (Hamann & Rosen, 2011; Levinson & Sutton, 2001). The policy’s title about bilingual education was misleading; the content of the mandate privileged English immersion and as a result, the majority of schools in the state (76%) decided to forego the bilingual education component of the mandate and implement pullout English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. While most schools complied with the mandate’s call for bilingual or ESL-certified teachers, Loewenhaupt reports that staffing was not sufficient to support actual enrollments, resulting in high student-to-teacher ratios at the schools with the most Spanish-speaking students. Aware of the dialogue between principals and state policy, Loewenhaupt cautions against blaming the mandate for the shortcomings of implementing actual bilingual supports for the Spanish-speaking students. Rather, she suggests that
state and local agencies must provide the support, guidance, and resources to facilitate local school’s discussions with policies.

Herrera and Holmes present the only dialogue in this section that directly includes the voices of students (although there are many such examples in Chapters 2 through 9 of this volume). Findings from a survey of students, the majority Latino, participating in the BESITOS program at Kansas State University revealed that these students’ experiences were diverse and that sculpting an experience in higher education that is congruent with students’ backgrounds requires much more than simply recruiting more Latino students. They show that an increase in structural diversity (in this case, the recruitment of more Latino students) across campus did not guarantee cross-group informal interactions nor classroom diversity; as a result, “Latina/o students often struggle to see themselves as members of the university community” (this volume). Herrera and Holmes argue that the university’s recruitment and retention efforts must respond to these students by expanding efforts to incorporate students’ biographies into all aspects of the university and offering genuine support not only through special programs.

Two studies in this section focused on the dialogue between educational policy and parents. Adair used multivocal ethnography to involve parents in a conversation about preschool, the inclusion of bilingual teachers, and an informal bilingual program. Parents in towns in Iowa and Tennessee watched a video of an informal bilingual preschool classroom in Arizona and discussed it in focus groups. The parents’ children were not enrolled in a bilingual preschool program, yet the video spurred conversations about their beliefs of how school should be for their children in their own districts. The discussions illuminated a power differential between parents and teachers that resulted in barriers to communication and authentic relationships between parents and teachers as well as students and teachers. Although parents complied with school practices, they did not always agree with them; they felt that bilingual teachers would help the school perceive them more positively as parents and not just as immigrants, and help their children have better and more just learning experiences. The most poignant finding from this study, though, was not the concerns of the parents per se, but rather that the teachers did not know these concerns or did not know how to respond to them effectively. The parents, though grateful for this educational experience for their children,
did not feel comfortable expressing their concerns to the teachers (even though Adair was able to elicit them). When there was an opportunity to discuss parent concerns during a focus group session, the teachers resented the criticisms (illustrating the parents’ correct assumption that their feedback would not be welcome). This structural barrier indicates that the manner in which and the extent to which the parents are invited to engage in the dialogue about Latino students in schools is determined by the school (Adair suggests that the school expects parents to abide by a pro-immigrant script [Hamann, 2002; Súarez-Orozco, 1998]) and is, as a result, limited.

Gallo and her co-researchers studied a collaborative effort between a school district and a university to increase Spanish-speaking parents’ involvement in a school in the mid-Atlantic town of Marshall. (See also Wortham & Rhodes, this volume.) That project facilitated parent involvement through parent meetings with school administrators and through the use of after-school resource rooms. Over time, the project shifted from using a traditional approach to working with parents, which was educator-centered and included the school telling the parents what they should do, to a repertoire approach that recognizes individuals’ experiences with cultural practices that may or may not reflect the shared histories of a group. The latter approach had a “divergent capacity and commitment to heterogeneous ideals and repertoires” (Gutierrez & Rogoff in Gallo et al., this volume). In regard to parent involvement, this approach adopts some of the repertoires of everyone involved, expanding everyone’s capacity in the process. The project organically transitioned from a traditional approach as the teachers and parents formed more personal relationships and the teachers responded to parents’ requests for language instruction in the resource rooms. Parents also asked to take over organizing the parent meetings with the administration, advancing the shift toward a repertoire approach. Perhaps because this was a long-term project or perhaps because of sustained third-party involvement, the parents, teachers, school officials, and researchers were able to move past the structural power imbalance that Adair had noted in her study and generate a more equitable dialogue amongst participants.

Four of the seven chapters in this section looked more intently at teachers, including the just-discussed Adair chapter. Another chapter (Contreras et al.) accounted for teachers’ responses to the changing demographics at their schools in the Pacific Northwest and posited
how these perceptions could contribute to the educational experiences of Latinos. The two other studies (Sawyer & Richardson Bruna) looked at travel-study programs constructed for teachers to help them learn critical intercultural skills to be better prepared to work with Latino students and families, although in Richardson Bruna’s example the educator participants were no longer in the classroom, but instead educational administrators. All four studies, demonstrate the centrality of educators in shaping the institutional response to Latino families.

Contreras and her research team used a mixed methods approach to learn about teachers’ perceptions of and interactions with Latino students and their families at eight different school districts (urban, rural, urban ring) in Washington State. Through survey data, they found that while all schools were concerned with accountability for Latino student learning measured via state testing, rural schools were more concerned than urban. Interview data found that teachers placed a degree of blame on Latino students for preventing the school from meeting their goals. The majority of teachers surveyed felt that less than a quarter of their Latino students were bound for college, and while it was not made clear how these attitudes translated into practice, in the interviews, a general deficit view of how these students prepared for the future was articulated and concerns for college readiness were deflected to a special program to help students prepare for higher education. Echoing the findings of Adair (this volume), Washington teachers cited the limitations of the language barrier when working with parents, yet few discussed how they actively worked to engage parents. Contreras et al. pointed to the integral role that teachers play in forming the educational landscape for Latino students and determining the degree to which students and families are included in the dialogues that shaped their educational experience.

Both Sawyer and Richardson Bruna presented participant-observation studies of programs that were aimed at better preparing teachers and administrators to work with students and families within the NLD through short-term travel abroad experiences in Mexico. Sawyer focused on three practicing teachers from Nebraska during their visit to Guadalajara. All of the teachers were working in towns that had experienced increases in Latino students and were also involved in school initiatives that aimed to support Latino students. Although the teachers had varying degrees of cultural immersion experiences prior to the trip, all three teachers attributed a growing sense of cross-cultural
awareness, and an awareness of their own personal biases to their time spent in Mexico. Furthermore, the teachers also indicated how their experience could apply to their teaching practices, such as utilizing greater rigor when placing Mexican-origin students in language and intervention programs and reaching out to Latino parents while expressing a genuine empathy. Such insights suggest that teachers are more apt to think critically about school policies in a way that is empathetic to Latino students and families after participating in such trip, but Sawyer also finds (echoing Hamann [2003]) that the individual transformation the teachers claimed was not reciprocated by a larger response from their educational workplaces. That is, the teachers felt like they knew more and could be more responsive to Latino students and parents, but also that the systems they were part of were not necessarily responsive to or interested in their new capacities.

Richardson Bruna reports on the even briefer experiences of about thirty superintendents, principals, ELL coordinators, teacher educators, and Iowa Department of Education administrators who participated in state-sponsored trips to Villachuato, Mexico. Instead of individual graduate students enrolling in coursework that includes travel-study (which is what Sawyer describes), a key point here is that there was systemic (i.e., state department of education) approval of the learning opportunity. This is even more impressive when one realizes that Iowa’s Latino population was not quite big enough, proportionally to even qualify it for Table 17.1 (which counted the NLD states where at least 10% of the 18-and-under population in 2011 was Latino), although at 9% it almost made that table’s admittedly arbitrary threshold.

The described trip visited the Mexican community of Villachuato, which, although only a small town of just over 3000 inhabitants, was the largest sending community to Marshalltown, Iowa (population 27,500), a meatpacking community with a sizeable Latino newcomer contingent. The Villachuato visits were intended to “provide these educational professionals with understandings about the kinds of family and schooling experiences that are antecedent to and preconfigure their interactions, in Iowa, with immigrant youth from rural Mexican communities so that they could better advocate for teaching practices and policies that would best serve, from an additive stance, their cultural and linguistic differences and related socioacademic interests and needs” (Richardson Bruna, this volume).
Richardson Bruna demonstrates how the participants came to acknowledge and reexamine the “worlds in [their] heads” (Delpit, 1993, as cited in Richardson Bruna, this volume), that is, the beliefs, based on particular interpretive lenses, that they held about the Latino students in Iowa’s schools. Participants’ post-trip reflections about photographs that they had also viewed before departing included more intricate insights to the globalized and transnational characteristics of Villachuato, such as the recognition of that community’s economic dependence on resources from the U.S. (remittances) used to upgrade and upkeep houses and the related recognition that the U.S. subsidizing corn production (including in Iowa) meant traditional corn growing in Villachuato was no longer economically competitive. Trip participants reported integrating their experiences into their worksites and their relations with Latino students and their families; one participant even replicated the “worlds in their heads” experience by using Richardson Bruna’s techniques of examining photographs in professional development sessions. The changes in the participants’ “worlds” based on this experience potentially changed how they participated in the dialogue concerning Latino students.

Looking Across Chapters

By clustering these seven chapters together, an underlying conversation between the authors can be made explicit and used to identify at least two topics that deserve further recognition and pondering. First, is the notion of space, belonging, and possibility. The second is educational decisions concerning Latino students in the NLD.

The Concept of Space in the New Latino Diaspora

The concept of space can be looked at several ways. In the simplest regard, space can reference the geographical location in which something occurs, in these cases where a policy is conceived and where it is appropriated. The spaces of the educational infrastructure in these seven studies physically expanded beyond the walls of the schools, crossing into homes, communities, and even into different countries. For example, of the studies depicted how policies reach into
students’ families’ lives in attempts to be more inclusive. Loewenhaupt’s analysis of Wisconsin’s bilingual-bicultural policy showed state leaders’ acknowledgement of the linguistic and cultural dynamics of Latino students’ home and their acknowledgement that these children were developing language and cultural practices that transcend traditional conceptions of group culture and language, but the space where this understanding exists (or, more accurately existed) was different from where its observation in practice was to occur. When put into conversation with Adair’s and Gallo et al.’s studies, it seems likely that parents would support bilingual and bicultural approaches that would permit students and families the opportunity to develop language skills in both English and Spanish. However, Contreras et al. and Adair demonstrate how the perceptions and preconceptions of teachers can thwart efforts to be more accommodating and accepting of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In other words, what seemed advisable and welcome in the domestic spaces of Latino households and, at least in Wisconsin, in the spaces of state-level policymakers did not seem to translate into the classrooms negotiated by Latino children.

Sawyer and Richardson Bruna, however, show that the worlds that educators hold in their heads are not fixed; they can develop and change. The curricular and pedagogical geography of school can physically include the space of Latino students’ (multiple) country(ies) of origin through educators’ visits to those places. Holding the dialogue in this space permits educators to physically experience a piece of students’ and families’ lives and learn/appropriate the implications of a structural response, or policy, in a personal manner.

Still, Herrera and Holmes remind us that Latino students’ backgrounds stem not only from possible sending communities, but also from the contexts in the United States in which most grew up, partially or completely. Educators need not go as far as Mexico to learn more about students’ lives: a more authentic and empathetic understanding of the U.S.-based communities could be integrated into Euro-American-dominated schools and universities. The geo-cultural space of the NLD connects sending sites and receiving sites in transnational communities in which the community has a plural, transnational physical geography that is incompletely defined as here or there (Guerra, 1998).
As the term “geo-cultural” hints, space can be conceptualized in additional ways than just physical geography. As individuals—parents, students, teachers, administrators, policymakers—enter into dialogue with each other, a “third space” develops between them (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Tejeda, 1999). Instead of merely focusing on the back and forth interplay between the initial utterance (the policy or practice in this case) and the other’s reply, Bakhtin included the relation between the two as a third dialogic space (Holquist, 1990). This thirdness is a manner to capture the “event of being” as it happens in dialogue, a concept that Bakhtin refers to as addressivity (Holquist, 1990). The dialogues that occur within and across chapters in this section, then, capture the educational addressivity in the contemporary NLD.

Through their analyses of policy implementations, Lowenhaupt, Herrera and Holmes, and Gallo et al. voice the need for support at the different levels of implementation that mirrors the realities of the populations they serve, but that are flexible enough to change over time to be reflective of the dialogue that is unfolding. Contreras et al. and Adair capture the role that teachers sometimes actively play in constructing barriers that hinder Latino students’ and families’ access to and involvement with educative resources. Yet even as these obstructions are revealed, efforts in Iowa (Richardson Bruna) and Nebraska (Sawyer) to foster intercultural competence suggest that educators can become cognizant of the barriers they are constructing (at that are socially extant) and actively work to abolish them and/or counteract them. For example, they can recognize and build on Latino families’ “funds of knowledge”—the means families and social networks deploy to respond to various daily challenges (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

Together, these chapters create a dialogue about educational responses as they are and as they could be within the NLD. In this space, policies must be implemented in a way that permits them to be molded in order to reflect the heterogeneity (Wortham, this volume) of Latinos in the United States. Structural responses must include enough support, economic and otherwise, throughout the implementation process. And this support must also be flexible and responsive to the dialogic nature of policy.
**Looking Forward: Education Decision Making in the New Latino Diaspora.**

Dialogue is generative of ideas and it is hoped that the research presented in this section will encourage educators, researchers, and policymakers to think about the next steps in ways beyond our own imagining. However, we can offer our insight concerning the next steps that this conversation might take in order to continue and to be fruitful. The premise of future conversations must include the understanding that formal responses (which are conventionally called policies) are actually dialogic in nature (Levinson & Sutton, 2001). It is on this principle that we encourage readers to think about possible dialogic “next turns.” Whose turn is next? Which voices have been included? Excluded? Who still needs to respond?

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that, knowing what we know now from various stakeholders, that policies should be turned back to their creators in order to be reconsidered and readjusted. However, that leaves intact the privilege of the initiator. We must recognize that there are several stakeholders who have not yet contributed to these conversations or who have only been able to react (not pro-act). Some studies have incorporated the voices of teachers, but not of students or parents. Some have focused on parents and teachers, but not on local or state administrators. Only one of the studies (Herrera and Holmes) actively included students’ responses to a policy, but even in this study there is a need to hear from the faculty and staff to complete the dialogic portrait of the BESITOS program.

We do not intend this as criticism, but rather as a jumping off point. Thanks to these authors for capturing what they have captured and depicting what they have depicted, but what next? As these chapters illustrate (even when they include some “good news”) the challenges of educationally serving Latinos well in the NLD still is far from full realization. The challenge then is to amplify the dialogue while actively molding and shaping policies to better address students’ and families educational needs. Putting these seven chapters in dialogue with the introduction and other eight chapters of the book does offer some amplification. With that gesture we capture the testimonios recorded by Urrieta, Kolano, and O. Jo and Raible and Irizarry. We consider the fate of students and families who are not just Latino, not
just Mexican, but Purépecha (Leco Tomas, this volume). We consider what it means when there are few other students like you, whether because of adoption (Flores-Koulish) or your district’s very preliminary participation in the NLD (Bruening). These help us see that students’ input in the dialogue of policy is arguably the most important: their response to the infrastructure informs us as to whether or not the changes we anticipated are manifested into reality.

David Labaree (2010) wrote that students are often the last rung on the ladder of educational reform, but the most important in regard to considering whether or not the reform “worked.” Traditionally, efforts need to pass through many hands before they reach the students, yet how students interact with an initiative is the ultimate measure as to how well it served them. As states and towns respond to growth in their Latino populations, an effort is needed to pull students into the dialogue sooner. Imagine K–12 or college students reading the chapters about the changes they noted in their teachers and administrators after they visited their hometown in Mexico. Or reading the chapters about teachers in their states de facto erecting barriers rather than ameliorating opportunity.

The purpose here is not to argue that students as stakeholders should have a louder voice in how institutions respond to demographic changes. Rather, it is to raise awareness about the dialogue that happens inevitably when an institution crafts a policy to put into practice and to challenge educators to think about the presence and absence of stakeholders in that dialogue. The seven studies presented in this section have reminded us that there is a rich dialogue concerning Latino students happening within states and across research that entails multiple voices, but these dialogues and wise practices that could follow remain incomplete. The next step must be to expand the conversation to generate ideas that are authentic to the communities from which they emerge and that seek to best serve students and families in the New Latino Diaspora. Look again at Table 17.1 to remember just how many students, families, and communities this all matters to.
References


