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Addressing the Critical Shortage of Latinos in Music Education: Pre-Service Latino Music Education Student Perspectives on Recruitment and Retention Strategies

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ADDRESSING THE CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF LATINOS IN MUSIC EDUCATION: PRE-SERVICE LATINO MUSIC EDUCATION STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

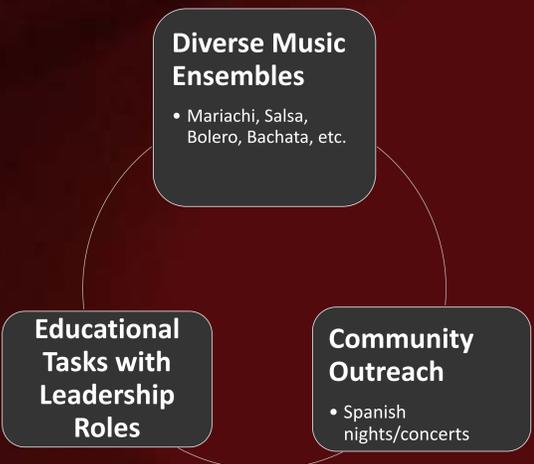
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Abstract: My research focus is on 1st and 2nd generation Latino music education students and their paths to becoming music educators in the United States. Latino students are an under researched portion of music education in the American population, but represent the fastest growing ethnic group in America. During my preliminary research I found that there is a critical shortage of Latino music educators. Through an instrumental case study with critical-case sampling, done through interviews and a questionnaire taken by several pre-service Latino music education majors at a southwest university, I found that the most important factor for recruiting future music educators was having a mentor of strong character to guide and inspire students. The Latino student attitude and perception was taken into account as those researched live this experience and provide the necessary insight into this critical issue as a direct source. In my research, I found that to successfully recruit and retain Latino music education students, teachers and administrators must provide diverse music ensembles, community outreach, and educational tasks with leadership roles. The reason why there is a shortage of Latino music educators, according to pre-service Latino music educators, have to do with: 1. A career process that is too long and expensive; 2. Too few scholarship opportunities; 3. Music education programs that tend to serve more as a roadblock than an opportunity due to their long duration and expensive course load that leads students to drop the major and pursue other degrees and careers.

Methods: A qualitative instrumental case study with critical-case sampling was used to "...yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (Patton, 236). The instrumental case study was done on six pre-service music education Latino students at a southwestern university (name not revealed to protect student identities). The recruitment and selections of "pre-service Latino music educators" were very specific and I utilized data of the same institution that fit the profile requirements to conduct this study. This qualitative case study consisted of interviews that I conducted, asking the subjects series of questions that were personal, demographic, and research related.

Results: The results indicate the most important and influential person for a pre-service Latino music education students on the path to becoming music educators is their music director at their local school. All the interviewed students mentioned their band directors as the greatest influence due to their outstanding character, professionalism, responsiveness, and care they showed through their secondary school careers. Four out of six students mentioned their college faculty also as a positive influence, as they helped navigate these students through a tough music education degree, providing much needed assistance and encouragement through difficult moments such as barrier juries, final exams, and recitals. A surprising and unexpected result was that all students interviewed came from a middle to upper income status.

Pre-Service Latino music education perspectives:



- The strategies offered by pre-service Latino music educator: 1. Offer a variety of diverse music ensembles; 2. Community outreach, student responsibility and leadership tasks; 3. Diverse music ensembles such as Mariachi, Latin Jazz, Salsa, Bachata, and other genres familiar with the Latino culture would stimulate higher parental interests and participation and thus create support in booster and attendance.
- Second Perspective: Community outreach - The students saw teachers constantly struggling with parent communication (directly through phone, e-mail, and letters). If they had communicated properly, it would have worked for the teacher's advantage because according to the students, Latinos have strong community ties and would have volunteered for booster and support programs. Having "Parent Nights" and "Latino Parent Night" were ideas that were thought to increase recruitment and retention as a means to educating parents and seeing the value of a music education in the lives of these students.
- Third Perspective: Provide leadership roles and assistant tasks for students. These are necessary components that help motivate students by allowing them to participate in the program somewhat of an authority role, by shadowing their instructors and conducting sectionals and rehearsals. It gives students a view into the things band directors do on a daily basis and gives students a deep and profound appreciation for the career and music.

Conclusion: The purpose of this research is to address the critical shortage of Latino educators and provide music teachers, educators, and administrators the tools necessary to succeed in the recruitment and diversification of its student music population, while forming potential music educators. The pre-service music education students were influenced and encouraged by their music instructors to pursue music and music education and to this day are in route to graduate and become educators in their local district. Latinos are an underserved and underrepresented population in the music education field (and education in general) and also one of the fastest growing populations under the age of 18 in the United States. Their perspective on what strategies are most effective to recruit and retain future Latino educators are necessary to be followed by instructors and administrators for success. Providing diverse ensembles and community outreach are essential for success and administrators should provide funding to have the music director able to handle those ensembles or delegating to a paraprofessional. Providing tasks and leadership roles such as sectionals are also essential for students as they provide a view of what the music instructor does, providing influence, inspiration, respect, and admiration for the career. The pre-service Latino music education perspective on the shortage of Latino music educators heads into two main themes; not enough money and incentive to become a teacher, and the process too long and expensive. It is a known fact that teacher salaries are low, and that combined with the tremendous amount of work music teachers have to perform, it lessens the incentive to become a music teacher. The process to become an educator is too long and filled with a lot of bureaucracy. University-level Music Education programs are designed to take five years to complete, and often students take upward of seven years. Few scholarship opportunities and expiration of financial aid, make music education a career that is too difficult to pursue, unless with strong financial backing. This leads to a lack of motivation to pursue teaching, and head to a different field.

Common Conflicts:

