

EXAMINING THE FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE OF FIRST GENERATION LATINO/A
COLLEGE ADVISERS

by

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Abstract

This study strives to answer the question of how do first-generation, Latino/a college advisers from low-socioeconomic backgrounds use their funds of knowledge in their practice. In other words, it is an investigation on how professional knowledge and personal knowledge interact with each other in their profession. Through the use of research regarding Funds of Knowledge, Intersectionality, W.E.B Dubois' Double Consciousness and Victor Frankl's Logotherapy, I seek to understand how these two very different funds of knowledge clash within this unique group of people who are returning to the communities they once left in the pursuit for a better life through education.

Keywords: first-generation, college access, college advising, Latino students, double-consciousness, intersectionality, logotherapy.

Author's Note

“I want to become what I once needed.” I heard this quote when I was a senior in high school and I did not quite comprehend what it meant. At the time I was struggling trying to find someone to help me understand what the “college process” was, and what acronyms like “SAT” and “FAFSA” meant. To this day, I still remember the first time I stepped into the new “college room” at my school. It was in that room where I met two of the most influential people in my life: my two college advisers. It was in that room where I not only learned how to overcome the obstacles Latino and aspiring first generation college students have to face when striving for a higher education, but where I also learned what that quote meant and how it impacted my own life.

Examining the Funds of Knowledge of First Generation Latino/a College Advisors

This article examines the pressing issue of the low numbers of first generation, low-socioeconomic status, Latinos entering college and how one program, the College Advising Corps, can help these students overcome the obstacles they face in the process. The numbers of first generation college students succeeding in higher education are at a very low point in our country; as Latinos and students from other ethnic groups enter college underprepared, we as educators must invest in preventative measures to decrease these numbers. Latino young adults continue to be the least educated major racial group in terms of completion of a bachelor's degree, according to the Pew Hispanic center (Roscoe, J. 2015). Latinos are also the largest ethnic group with the poorest college completion rates (Roscoe, J., 2015). According to the Pew Research center on Hispanic trends, Latinos are the nation's youngest major racial group. Just in the state of Texas, there are about 9.8 million Latinos- 83% are of Mexican descent. Due to these numbers in Texas, increasing the number of Latinos entering and completing college will be essential for its economic growth (Yamamura, E., Martinez, M., & Saenz, V., 2010). As mentioned previously, if the largest ethnic population continues to be uneducated, not only Texas, but the nation will suffer the consequences. However, one program used to assist and solve this pressing issue is the College Advising Corps (CAC). Through the help of academic advisers working in underserved high schools, this program can serve as a great mean of helping this unique group of students succeed and have a greater opportunity for college access.

The CAC program works through recruiting recent graduates from partner universities across the nation; these graduates are then trained to become college advisers and work in underserved high schools (College Advising Corps, 2016). There is research that confirms the notion that Hispanics are more likely to attend low performing high schools in contrast to their

White peers (Roscoe, J., 2015). Thus, it is essential to focus on schools that tend to have a majority-minority ethnic student population, as well as students who come from low income families.

In this study, I will focus on the CAC program at a private liberal arts institution in North Texas. In this particular CAC program, some of the advisers are first generation, low SES Latino/as. However, they are also successful graduates from this same private university who have had four years of study in their respective fields. Though these advisers are highly educated young professionals, it is possible that their personal history impacts them when working as college advisers. The focus of the present study is to explore ways in which their personal and professional histories interact. It is aimed to see how the double consciousness of being a college adviser and a student who was once at-risk affects them professionally. The possible answers to this inquiry will also include the concept of intersectionality and how we can use intersectionality as a means to understand the relationships in systematic oppression for first generation Latino students. In addition, I will use logotherapy as a mean to guide the conversation with the advisers as to why they decided to give back; since logotherapy deals with a change in attitude and suffering, I will use this approach to study how the past struggles of these young college advisers now serve them as an asset to help others who reflect their pasts.

Literature Review

Identity Intersectionality

Social theorist, Patricia Hill Collins, defines the term intersectionality as, "...the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as reciprocally constructing phenomena" (Collins, P., 2015).

The term and concept of Intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw; in her work, she brings awareness of multiple identities and inequalities, and how they interact with each other and society. Crenshaw begins with race and gender, with Black women at the center. As best described by Catharine A. MacKinnon, intersectionality, “reveals women of color at the center of overlapping systems of subordination in a way that moves them from the margins of single-axis politics that has often set priorities for opposing inequality as if they did not exist.” Crenshaw writes about how Black women tend to be left out of issues concerning feminism and racism. She argues that Black women are discriminated in the court and in legal issues due to the fact that they do not fit into the legal categories of “racism” or “sexism”; simply put, Black women fit into both. An example of how Black women do not fit into feminism or sexism, is by reading Sojourner Truth’s “Ain’t I a Woman” speech delivered in 1851:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I could have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman? (Truth, S., 1851).

As for racism, Crenshaw argues that issues of racism are more commonly represented by Black men and men of color. Living in a sexist society places Black women at a disadvantage since males dominate. One of Crenshaw’s arguments of sexism is through analyzing the neglect of Black women in cases of rape and rap lyrics. Through her analysis, Crenshaw states that antiracist critiques of rape law focus on how the law operates primarily to condemn rapes of White women by Black men. The concern of raping of White women, lead to the protection of White women against Black men; however it simultaneously reflected the devaluation of Black

women (Crenshaw, K., 1991). In Gary LaFree's "Rape and Criminal Justices: The social Construction of Sexual Assault", (a study of rape prosecutors on Minneapolis), LaFree affirms previous findings that Black men accused of raping White women were treated severely, while Black men who raped Black women were treated with less contempt under the law (Crenshaw, K., 1991).

Crenshaw summarizes it best, "Because women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color and sexism in ways not always parallel to experiences of White women, antiracism and feminism are limited..." (Crenshaw, K., 1991).

Identity intersectionality will influence this work due to the lens that it provides; it is a critical medium to explain how multiple aspects of one's identity do not work separately from each other, but are fused inextricably. In this form of praxis, intersectionality can support (or not) how the personal and professional identities impact the adviser's role as a professional.

Intersectionality can also help explain why first-generation, low-income, Latino students face certain struggles and have certain opportunities unique to them as a group. Just as how Crenshaw uses intersectionality as a praxis to analyze forms of oppression for Black women, I am influenced to use intersectionality to analyze how these multiple identities (first-generation, Latino/a, low-SES) affect how this group succeeds and struggles in our society. In sum, I will try to use this concept to move towards challenging the dynamics that perpetuate educational inequalities in first generation, low-SES, and Latino students.

Logotherapy, Victor Frankl

Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy is a meaning-centered approach to psychotherapy and falls under existential psychiatry. In logotherapy, treatment is aimed with respect to the patient's attitude towards something unchangeable (Frankl, 1967). The word derives from "Logos", a

Greek word, which denotes meaning. Thus logotherapy focuses on the meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future (Frankl, 1946).

One of the issues logotherapy deals with is the concept of the existential vacuum. The “existential vacuum” is a metaphor, which represents a “hole” in our lives. This hole is the emptiness found in an individual’s life. Frankl states that the existential vacuum is “a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century.” Unlike animals, humans do not have instincts that tell him or her what to do with his or her life. Instead, humans either wish to do what other people do (conformism) or do what other people wish him or her to do (totalitarianism). The goal of logotherapy is not however to give meaning to a patient; meaning cannot be prescribed like a drug. Through an existential analysis, logotherapy provides support for the patient to find meaning in life. Meaning can be found in unavoidable suffering, and suffering can be transformed into meaning when faced with the right attitude (Frankl, 1967).

Since logotherapy studies the change in attitude through suffering, I will use this approach to study how the past struggles of the advisers now serve them as an asset to help others who reflect their pasts. I believe logotherapy will help solve the question of, “How does someone’s personal experience and hardships affect the way we influence and direct our pupils?”

Funds of Knowledge

The term, Funds of Knowledge, was coined by Norma Gonzalez and Luis C. Moll as an approach to refer to the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N., n.d.). Gonzalez and Moll used funds of knowledge to study and analyze how individuals use their own funds of knowledge in dealing with unstable and difficult social and economic circumstances (Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N., n.d.). In

one of their studies, Moll and Gonzalez investigated the funds of knowledge of Mexican families in Tucson, Arizona through qualitative research, such as interviews and home visits. In this particular study, the researchers focused on how to use the funds of knowledge of these families and incorporate them into the schools their children attend and the curriculum the children learn. Thus, these funds of knowledge serve as cultural and cognitive resources which are then used in classroom instruction and curriculum as “participatory pedagogy” (Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N., n.d.).

The goal of their work is to recognize the strengths family education and in particular, Mexican families, have on their children. Mainstream society can sometimes tend to stereotype Mexican families as “dysfunctional” and with a need to be “educated.” However, these studies unravel these stereotypes and prove that there is so much more to learn from families and communities. A transformative effect of funds of knowledge, is that it challenges the “deficit” perspective of minority children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. It disproves the “pervasive idea of households as lacking worthwhile knowledge and experiences” (Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., Tenery, M., Rivera, A., Rendon, P., Gonzales, R., & Amanti, C., 1995). Funds of knowledge goes beyond “culture-sensitive curriculum”- which can tend to be superficial in schools. On the other hand, funds of knowledge incorporates genuine family and community experiences that are relevant to the students’ lives. For example, in the same study mentioned, the researchers and teachers found that one of the students in the study, Carlos, sold candy from Mexico. The teachers then decided to use Carlos’ knowledge on selling candy and incorporating it into a variety of lessons. These included a lesson on comparing and contrasting candy from Mexico and the U.S, a parent coming in and teaching the students how to make a traditional Mexican candy, and the students selling and trading their candy in class.

As Gonzalez and Moll confirm, families have their own unique funds of knowledge and teachers must ensure to tap into these funds and incorporate them into the classroom. In this study, I will use the term, funds of knowledge to discriminate the two main “funds”, personal background and formal academic training, these advisers use when working with students of similar backgrounds as them.

Double Consciousness, W.E.B Du Bois

In W.E.B Du Bois's 1903 work, The Souls of Black Folk, Du Bois introduces the notion of “double consciousness.” Double consciousness can be defined as a kind of socio-psychological disposition of African Americans or people of color living in a White society. It is a conflicted state of mind for African Americans who are unable to reach self-fulfillment due to the impediment of “the veil.” This “veil” is a metaphor for the segregation and racism in U.S society during the lifetime of Du Bois. He refers to the veil as an impediment between Black people and opportunity (Du Bois, W. 2012). Double consciousness is born out of oppression and “reflects a ‘twoness’ - a consciousness that is at once American and Black” (Martinez, T., 2002).

However, this double consciousness comes with a “gift” - it's is a “burden and a gift ‘in the name of an historic race... and in the name of human opportunity’” (Martinez, T., 2002). Having a double consciousness is a gift because one sees the world through two different lenses. However, it is also a burden because it impedes the Black man/woman to see and fulfill his/her full potential; instead, the Black man/woman sees oneself through a world “that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (Du Bois, W., 2012). One may ask, could the two consciousness's ever be merged together? According to literature, “Du Bois himself was not entirely certain about the possibility of such a synthesis” (Dickinson, B., 1992). However, Du Bois wrote about the possibility of the African American, “to merge his double self into a better and truer self.”

In my research, since I will be working with Latino advisers who were once in their pupil's shoes, I will use Du Bois' concept of double consciousness on how the advisers see themselves as members of this group of past students and as current professionals. These advisers have a double consciousness; they are now an adviser, but they also were students who came from disadvantaged backgrounds like the students they are now serving. Due to this unique experience, I want to further investigate how this double-consciousness can be or is used in their profession.

In this work, I will be using these three concepts and term to examine what funds of knowledge first generation, Latino/a college advisers use in praxis. Since I will be focusing on advisers who have a past similar to the group of students they are now serving, I believe these concepts will help guide my research into the importance of understanding how these two different funds of knowledge interact with one another. Furthermore, I would like to extend my investigation to analyze the obstacles this particular community faces and how investing in advising and mentoring can help this particular group of students overcome obstacles in their pursuit of higher education. Intersectionality and double consciousness are both very similar in that they both tie the notion of having more than one set identity. As mentioned previously, the advisers have the benefit of being a professional adviser while also coming from a deep and meaningful background similar to their students. Even though one is a professional and has been trained in advising, I assume that personal experiences and background also play a major role in how these advisers succeed at their profession. Last, Frankl's logotherapy brings the main idea of this methodology together; if meaning can be found in suffering, and suffering can be transformed into meaning when faced with the right attitude (Frankl, 1967), then the past of these advisers could influence the way they influence their pupils.

The research I plan to conduct will focus on the issue of first generation, low-income, Latino students and college access in North Texas. I will be conducting interviews with recent graduates who fit this description and are now serving as college advisers for the College Advising Corps program under the university's College of Education. There is literature on first-generation college students who graduate and then move on to lead lives of activism and help others like them, succeed (Rodriguez, S. 2003). I believe the advisers are living examples of this; they are activists because they are giving back to their communities and to young people who reflect their past. I am interested in investigating how the knowledge they gained at their university and their background influences their decisions in helping other minority and low-income students attend college. I also want to investigate which type of knowledge (academia or personal struggles) they use most in a day-to-day basis as a college adviser for disadvantaged students.

This research could potentially support first generation college students, by having teachers, university admission counselors, and scholarship funds understand how investing in one student can lead to greater changes in a community and in future generations. This could also be useful and of great reference to other young college graduates who wish to become college advisers, whether joining CAC or programs similar to it.

Method

Research Questions

For the research study, I based my questions on the following topic domains: 1.) demographic information 2.) Family background 3.) Educational background 4.) Formal advising training and practice 5.) Other last questions. The questions rooted in these domains provided access to investigate the funds of knowledge my participants had.

Participant Demographics and Recruitment

For the recruitment process, I decided to use purposive sampling; a recruitment email was sent out to recent college graduates working in the college advising program. Participants had to identify as coming from low-socioeconomic backgrounds, as Latino/a, and as first-generation college graduates. Each participant was in his/her early twenties and identified themselves as first generation graduates, from low income homes and of Mexican descent. Kevin (male) was twenty five years old, born in Mexico but raised in Texas, with three years as an adviser. Ashley (female) was twenty four years old, Mexican-American, with two years as an adviser. Kevin hopes to continue working as an adviser, while Ashley will soon be graduating with a Master's in education in counseling. In addition, I employed prolonged engagement with a college adviser during the spring 2015 semester. During my placement that semester, I was able to observe the interactions she had with the students, helped her advise students and with other tasks, such as documenting and collecting data for the college advising program. The adviser I had prolonged engagement with, was not one of my participants since she did not meet any of the descriptions I needed for my study.

Setting

The setting for this study was in an urban area in North Texas. The College Advising Corp program is under a private, liberal arts college in the area. The high schools that the college advisers work in, are schools that are identified as underserved and have a majority ethnic minority populations. The setting for the interviews was at a private liberal arts university in North Texas; the same university where both participants graduated from and worked as college advisers for the college advising program housed there.

Procedure

The following subsections describe the components of the study:

Data sources

The sources of data consisted of one-one hour semi-structured interview with each participant. The interviews were conducted at the private university during the spring 2016 semester. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. As I analyzed the interview, I used Carspecken's critical ethnographic methodology to guide my interview protocol (Carspecken, 1996). While using Carspecken's methodology, I created five topic domains; each domain had a series of questions related to that domain. While creating the questions, I used covert categories to guide my questions and interviews. For example, when asking my participants to tell me about their family background, the possible responses fall into the covert categories of first-generation college graduate, the Latino culture, and family funds of knowledge. However, even with covert categories such as the previously mentioned, I knew that not all of the responses would fit into a specific covert category, thus other categories surfaced during analyzing the data. The names of the participants were also changed, as well as other names or titles referencing programs, universities, etc., to keep all involved in anonymity.

Data Analysis

With the use of Carspecken's critical epistemology (1996) while analyzing the data, I created a set of low and high-level codes for certain pieces of data from the interview with each participant. The low-level codes contain low-level inferences, thus for these codes, I used quotes that aligned with the research questions and original interview. For the high-level codes these involve the opposite of low-level codes. These invoke high-level inferences, or in other words, these are aligned with a variety of possible meanings and a higher level of abstraction (Carspecken, 1996). The transcriptions were not sent to the participants to add or edit. After the

coding was completed, a series of themes arose on what funds of knowledge the advisers used. These themes are further discussed in the results section of this study.

Study Limitations

One limitation with the study is the size of the pool of participants; I was glad to have a male and female in my interviews, however, the study would have more potential if the pool of participants was greater. Thus, the span of my data and study is limited to the interviews of two advisers. Another limitation is having a single interview with each; though in both interviews both Kevin and Ashley spoke of their experiences with a variety of emotion, I think that maybe a second interview after producing the codes would have been helpful for clarification. A third limitation that must be noted is the lack of experience of the researcher, though I have been under the guidance of a supervising professor, as a first-generation college student myself and with no knowledge of conducting research before, I believe that my situation as a novice researcher limits the potential of this study.

Results

The findings suggest that there is a synergy of funds of knowledge that both participants use when advising students who reflect their background. Both participants' personal experience plays an essential role, however, they also incorporate their educational background and formal training in their college advising practice. Both participants discussed about the importance of their own personal background and how they want to help students like themselves in order to prevent them from having a negative experience or confusion during the college application process. For instance, Ashley notes:

Using personal funds of knowledge to help others

"I want to be a school counselor to help students like myself. I know that the college application process is something that counselors do and it lags. When I become a

counselor I will be better prepared with helping my students (in the college application process) than other counselors who aren't even first generation ... But since I've been there, I can break it down for them." –Ashley.

In Kevin's case, he noted the importance of role models in helping his students succeed and become motivated. He was a role model for his own family and he knew that just as his siblings benefited from seeing him graduate, he had to do the same for his students. He spoke about how he brings this to life in his practice:

Use of role models for students

"So I brought in alumni (to show) these are your classmates that just graduated a year ago, so I just want y'all to know that if they could do it you can do it. You've seen their struggles so you do not make the same mistakes they did... it's more of a way for them to learn from the things they could've done differently." –Kevin.

Both participants also spoke about the importance culture plays into their advising and how being a Latino college adviser helps them in their work with their students. Kevin pointed out a very important factor that sometimes hinders the potential for Latino students, especially females:

Use of cultural heritage in advising

"So a lot of the Hispanic moms are usually the ones at home who cook and clean; the dad is usually working, so the moms are more hesitant to let their daughters go away, because that's their daughter. That's the one that's most likely going to take care of them in the future, so they do not want their daughter going to any college far away. (...) So for them, it's not that they do not want their child to succeed, is that they want their daughter to be like down the street that way they can still help around the household, still help with chores. I would try to explain to my student's that sooner or later your parents are going to have to let you go, let you fly, get on your own. I understand there's probably situations going on, but they have to understand that you're not there to take care of them all the time (...) now you need to focus on your education." - Kevin.

Thus, these findings suggest that background experiences such as the importance of role models students can relate and look up to, being a first generation graduate who can "break it down" to aspiring first generation college students, and being Latino proved to be useful and

essential in motivating students to apply and to influencing them to “focus on their education.”

It also supports the theoretical framework of intersectionality, since these advisers used their multiple identities in conjunction to the formal training they received from the college advising program. Identities like first generation, Latino and low-income, worked constructively in their practice. The results also support the notion of a double-consciousness that both Kevin and Ashley possess; one being a college adviser and college graduate, the other a Latino/a student from a low-income home who once aspired to continue with their education. Their work now as advisers also supports the theoretical framework of logotherapy; though they faced obstacles in their past, they are now using that past suffering to help others like them. Their funds of knowledge are not limited to formal training and educational background; Kevin and Ashley are wealthy in knowledge due to their experience as first generation, low income Latino students.

However, both do not, in any way, disregard the formal training they received in the college advising program. Kevin notes how useful some of the trainings were:

Use of formal training fund of knowledge

“We learned about different scholarships, we also learned about financial aid, we learned about FAFSA; which is just for any regular student, and then TAFSA. We had a day or two designated for undocumented students; so we would talk about like what stuff they need for undocumented students (and) how to go about talking to parents for financial aid (...) We learned a lot about ethics, how to talk to students, how to talk to your counselors, how to talk with principals, teachers (...) just how to set the foundation for the school you’re going to. Then we also did a college tour week, so for a whole week, we went on different college tours (...) see their campus, see their admission requirements, their financial aid requirements, see what organizations they offer (...) so that way we would be more informed about the colleges we’re sending our students too.”- Kevin.

When asked about what other factors help Kevin and Ashley in their advising, both mentioned the close relationship they feel to the students they serve. In Kevin’s case, the

students and school he serves was the same high school he graduated from and the same school his siblings are attending or will attend.

Close relationship to students and community

“Knowing that I have siblings going to these schools where I’m going to be advising at (...) I try to push as much as I can with my college experience, my training, I push it as much as I can because I do want to set a foundation. Cause once I leave there will be a new person there and I would want the new person to have the same passion that I did. I want to make sure that they go out of their way because I know there’s some people that it’s just a job for them, but for me it was a passion, it was giving back; back to the community, back to the school. Because I know the school that I came from there wasn’t a lot of college access, and now since this program has started I have seen a great number of students applying to colleges, going to different colleges. To me they weren’t just students (...) I treated them like they were my brothers and sisters as well, like a family.”- Kevin.

Both advisers use their past experiences to help the students they now serve. Both work in predominantly title one, Latino high schools. The same contexts both came from. In their case, they have a strong relationship with the school’s they serve since the students reflect themselves and their past experiences.

Discussion

This study examined what funds of knowledge first generation Latino/a college advisers use in their practice, and to examine the influence (if any) of personal background and experience on their everyday job. Throughout the investigation it became apparent that personal background plays an influential role in these adviser’s practice with students who reflect their backgrounds. Personal background helped these advisers in guiding their students on their college-application journey. Whether serving as role models for their students, or simply being able to relate and explain to Latino parents that their sons and daughters can go to college and still maintain the family bond. On the other hand, formal training and educational background also play an influential role in preparing and advising their students in applying to colleges,

financial aid, and scholarships. As well as how to establish a positive foundation at the high school the advisers are placed at.

As mentioned at the beginning of this study, though the numbers of Latinos in our public schools is steadily increasing, Latinos lag behind every other major racial group in the country when it comes to higher education. According to the pew research center, “in 2012, 14.5% of Latinos ages 25 and older had earned a Bachelor’s degree. By contrast, 51% of Asians, 34.5% of whites and 21.2% of blacks had earned a bachelor’s degree. Hispanic college students are also less likely than whites to enroll in a four-year college, attend a selective college, and enroll full-time” (Lopez & Fry, 2013). However, these findings prove that the personal experiences of Latino, first-generation, and low-income students are valuable in education. Our students, in this case low-income Latino students, need to see themselves reflected in their mentors. The results make it apparent that role models and close relationships are valuable assets to help this specific group of students succeed.

The results also support the belief that if you invest in someone, in this case, Kevin and Ashley, there is a possibility that that individual will give back go back to their community and invest in others. It also supports and validates the experiences that first-generation, low-income Latino students have; it allows for others to see that though these students might lack a formal educational background that does not mean that they do not have other valuable funds of knowledge to bring to the classroom. In this case, their culture and personal experience was valuable in not only helping Kevin and Ashley graduate from a university, but it also helped influence the many students and families they worked with.

Author's Note Continued

As for my experience as a first generation Latina college student, who comes from a low income family, I too found myself looking back at my own experience while interviewing my participants. During my senior year, one of my college advisers told me to apply for the Bill Gates Millennium scholarship. I knew nothing about the scholarship, so I asked him to explain it to me. “It’s a full ride to anywhere you want to go,” he replied with joy. More curious than ever before, I asked how competitive it was. As soon as I heard the words “a thousand nationwide”, I did not think twice to reply with, “I’m sorry but you have the wrong person. I have no chance of competing for something like that; do not waste your time.” I was aware of the multiple identities I had, and was especially aware of the veil surrounding my life; a veil that impeded me to see my full potential and self-worth. However, my college adviser saw the potential in me and did not allow that veil to stop me from reaching my dreams. Eventually, I did apply; but I applied for him, because he believed in me and I did not want to disappoint. Months passed by and I became a finalist, and during the last month of my senior year, I received a packet in the mail from the Gates foundation with a huge “Congratulations!” across it. That packet contained a letter that stated I was one of the one-thousand nationwide that had been selected as a Gates Millennium scholar. That day changed my life for the better; it changed the trajectory of myself and my family. That same day I promised myself to let go of who I was and to become what I once needed. As someone who has faced the uncertainty of opportunities in life, I believe that one’s race, socio-economic status, and other identities and background should never be a “disadvantage” from continuing with education. I also believe that our experiences, as a first-generation Latina college student (soon to be graduate) from a poor family, are important and are valid in higher education and beyond.

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

TOPIC DOMAIN 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- a. Describe yourself:
 - a. Age
 - b. Gender
 - b. How would you describe your ethnic or racial identity?
 - c. Where are you from originally?
 - d. How long have you been a college adviser?
 - e. How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family of origin?
 - f. Do you identify as a first-generation college student?
 - g. What was your college major and minor? Where?
 - h. Do you have any other degrees, or are you working toward another degree now? Where?

TOPIC DOMAIN 2: FAMILY BACKGROUND

- a. Where is your family from?
- b. When did they/you come to the U.S.A?
- c. How has your family adjusted to U.S. society?
- d. How would you describe the neighborhood you grew up in?
- e. How do you feel the U.S. mainstream culture and Latino/a cultures interact with each other in your family?
- f. How do you see your racial group in terms of academic and professional success?

TOPIC DOMAIN 3: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- a. Tell me about your schooling growing up.
- b. What factors helped you get into college?
- c. Why did you want to become a college adviser?

TOPIC DOMAIN 4: FORMAL ADVISING TRAINING AND PRACTICE

- a. Describe the formal training you received as a college adviser.
- b. Are there other factors, besides your training, that you find useful when you are advising?

TOPIC DOMAIN 5: CONCLUSION

- a. Is there anything I didn't ask you about that you wish I had?
- b. Is there anything else you would like me to know?
- c. Anything else?

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