

**Review of Montiel-Overall, P. et.al.,
(2016). *Latinos in Libraries, Museums, and
Archives: Cultural Competence in Action!
An Asset Based Approach.*, NY: Rowan and
Littlefield. 291 p.**

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Libraries and other cultural institutions aim to offer the best service to their communities. As the communities around these institutions become more diverse, the library is often at a disadvantage, as the profession does not currently reflect this growing diversity. One group that has increased in both numbers and library use are Latinos. To help these cultural institutions better serve this patron base, authors Patricia Montiel-Overall, Annabelle Villaescusa Nuñez, and Verónica Reyes-Escudero offer *Latinos in Libraries, Museums, and Archives: Cultural Competence in Action! An Asset Based Approach*. This book seeks to offer cultural institutions information about cultural competence and how to apply these concepts in their institutions.

Dr. Patricia Montiel-Overall's research areas include research in school libraries, particularly teacher/librarian collaboration, and equity of access for Latinos and Native Americans as well as cultural competencies for libraries, work contained in this book Annabelle Villaescusa Nuñez is an embedded librarian who specializes in outreach for health information services in the community. Verónica Reyes-Escudero the curator of the Borderlands collection, the premier collection of archival material relating to the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest. All three authors have worked extensively in the intersection of libraries and Latino life. This qualifies them to write a volume encouraging both librarians and museum workers to be more inclusive in their practice.

In the introduction, the authors set out some basic definitions and attempt to dispel certain misconceptions surrounding Latinos. The authors do a thorough job explaining that Latinos are not monolithic and do not all have the same needs. They briefly explain the sociohistorical contexts of various Latino populations, both how they are alike and different. In this work the concept of *La Raza*, defines Latinos as a people with shared cultural characteristics and a shared sense of identity. By taking time to explore underlying concepts, the authors set a definition of what they mean by Latino and the socio-cultural norms they seek to explore as part of cultural competency.

The first chapter is perhaps the most important. Here, the authors lay out what they mean by an asset approach to cultural competency. While cultural competency has roots in the medical field after the Civil Rights Movement, all professionals wrestle with cultural competency. The framework here merges ideas of cultural competency with Latino critical theory to create a particularly Latino cultural competency. This amalgam takes into consideration not just race, but issues of colonization, language, and immigration. Rather than focus on what a community lacks, they advocate for an asset approach, a concept in social work that looks for the positive aspects either extant or dormant within a

community. The authors tie all these pieces into a cohesive framework of asset approach cultural competences for Latinos in libraries and museums. They see three key domains for this to be implemented: cognitive; interpersonal; and environmental, each with their own challenges. Additionally, the first chapter gives an interesting look at multiple interdisciplinary concepts that tie together nicely for LIS practice.

In the following chapters, the authors present how this framework looks in the various types of cultural institutions. For school libraries, the authors explain various aspects of the Latino experience that may come into play at school: including immigration; literacy; parenting in Latino families, etc. This chapter ends with a list of best practices that adhere to the author's framework. Many of these best practices require the school librarian to position themselves as an advocate, such that "school librarians can recognize that social, political, and economic issues may have negative effects on Latino students and become advocates for changes in school policies..." (p. 68). Such best practices position the school librarian as change agents within the schools. Such positioning must be supported by school and institutional administrations or the librarian may find they are not able to accomplish much of what they desire.

In the section on public libraries, outreach and programming are emphasized to reach Latinos in the community. Additionally, this section has reading lists and websites as resources for use with Latino patrons. This section stresses the importance of making library websites that are accessible to Spanish-speaking populations, such as offering the site in multiple languages. Best practices are given, but these are of a more practical immediate nature than those recommended for school librarians. For academic librarians, the authors focus on the unique needs of Latino college students and how librarians meet these needs. The focus here is on building personal relationships with students to encourage them to ask for help. They offer multiple best practices for academic librarians to consider when crafting solutions. The remaining chapters, focusing on health information services, and archives and museums, follow a similar pattern.

A shortcoming of the publication as a whole is the lack of uniformity between chapters. While all offer similar information, such as background on the population in context and best practices, they lack a cohesive format to easily identify sections. For example, in the school libraries section, the best practices are in a numbered list. However, in the academic libraries section, they are in a chart.

Overall, *Latinos in Libraries, Museums, and Archives* offers a critical look at how cultural institutions can gain cultural competencies when working with one of the fastest growing populations in America. Perhaps the most important aspect of this work is an introduction of the asset approach to cultural competencies to libraries and museums. While the foundations are based on complex theories such as critical race theory, and Latino critical theory, most of the chapters offer clear and practical ways to understand and implement this cultural competency framework. Individuals in cultural institutions already serving Latino populations or are planning more outreach in these communities would benefit from this work.