CMSI RESEARCH BRIEF

Reframing Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs): A Counterstory of a "Latinized" Institution in the Midwest

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this research brief is to reframe the research and policy perspective on Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Specifically, we answer the following question: What does a "Latinized" postsecondary institution look like? This report is based on qualitative interview data from a multi-site case study of three HSIs in the Midwest. Rather than looking at data that are typically used to determine an institution's value and prestige (i.e., SAT/ACT scores, selectivity, graduation rates, persistence rates), here we use the participants' stories in order to make sense of what it means, beyond White normative standards, to effectively serve Latinx students. We use a critical race counterstory methodology to tell a story about HSIs from an assets-based perspective.

Overview

Black and Latinx students are enrolling in Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in increasing rates. While MSIs enroll 20% of all college students, they enroll 40% of all undergraduate students of color (Cunningham, Park, & Engle, 2014). MSIs, therefore, are essential to the enrollment, education, success, and overall social mobility of minoritized groups. Yet, there is a lack of scholarship about these institutions and their role among the population of postsecondary institutions. Higher education scholarship and policy are often centered on the most selective institutions (Stevens, 2015), which are typically non-MSIs. In fact, the racial disparities in enrollment between the most selective and least selective institutions have been highlighted, with evidence showing that White students tend to enter the most selective institutions at much higher rates than Black and Latinx students (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Conversely, Black and Latinx students are increasingly enrolling in MSIs, which are more likely to be less selective institutions that provide broader access.

While there may be a number of reasons why less attention has been paid to MSIs, here we argue that racism is the core reason why these institutions are often disregarded and dismissed in research and policy. This argument is justified in this research brief by the use of a critical race perspective that places race at the center of our analysis. In using a critical race lens, we suggest that Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), one of several types of MSIs, defined by their enrollment of 25% or more full-time equivalent Latinx undergraduate students, are racialized and minoritized in similar ways as the students that they enroll. By this we mean that HSIs are underfunded at the state and local levels, undervalued for the critical work they are doing with minoritized

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students, and often criticized for graduating students at lower rates than more selective, higher resourced institutions. Within a stratified system of higher education, a majority of HSIs are situated among the less selective, lower resourced institutions and are more likely to enroll lower income, underprepared students (Malcom-Piqueux & Lee, 2011). Moreover, the federal designation of HSIs is by definition based on the enrollment of racialized students. For these reasons, an HSI identity is one that is fundamentally racialized, which has numerous implications for the value placed on HSIs.

Some have criticized HSIs for low graduation rates of Latinx students, using the term "Hispanic-enrolling" instead of "Hispanic-serving" to suggest that merely providing college access to Latinx students is an inadequate mission of these institutions. This ignores the fact that the federal government believes that providing access to Latinx students is an important mission of HSIs (Santiago, Taylor, & Calderón Galdeano, 2016). While graduating students is certainly an important outcome, evaluating HSIs simply based on graduation rates ignores other factors that strongly predict persistence including students' income level (Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014) and institutional resources (Garcia, 2013b), both of which are intertwined with race in a way that disadvantages students of color. Astin (2016) also reminds us that postsecondary institutions are evaluated based on an overall obsession with "smartness" that places value on the academic performance of students (as determined by standardized tests) and research productivity of faculty (as determined by the number of publications and grants they receive). Again, both of these measures are intertwined with race in a way that normalizes Whiteness in the academy.

Some critics have argued that HSIs operate like White institutions, with little regard for the specific needs of Latinx students. These arguments, however, are inherently tied to a system that values all things White. By this we mean that rather than suggesting that HSIs operate as White systems, critics may actually be arguing that HSIs are not serving Latinx students *because they are not White institutions*. The same has been said about Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), which have

been devalued and marked as inferior in comparison to traditionally White colleges (Wooten, 2015). Moreover, HBCUs are often "judged and valued according to how they measure up against benchmarks and standards associated with traditionally White colleges" (Wooten, 2015, p. 2). These standards were created long before institutional ranking systems and are almost entirely connected to the academic ethos of the university system, which values grades, standardized tests, research funding, selectivity, and elite status (Astin, 2016). Rather than comparing MSIs to White normative standards, here we reimagine what it would be like to accept MSIs, and HSIs in particular, as they are—and to learn about what makes them valuable entities within the larger system of higher education, beyond traditional measures of greatness based on White normative standards.

Theoretical Propositions

In this research brief we draw on critical race theory (CRT), which allowed us to analyze the data through a racial lens and to use a critical race counterstory methodology. Legal scholars such as Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlé Crenshaw developed CRT in the 1970s and developed a framework that "challenges the ways in which race and racial power are constructed and represented in American legal culture and, more generally, in American society" (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p. xii). As a result of the foundation laid by CRT legal scholars, CRT splintered into different disciplines like sociology, anthropology, and education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In their foundational article in the field of education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) used CRT as a framework to analyze school inequities—in other words, the disparities in resources—between White suburban schools and Black urban schools. As a result of this article, CRT's "growth and application in the field of education has been exponential" (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 9), with numerous scholars now using CRT to analyze the disparities in educational experiences and outcomes for students of color and their White counterparts (e.g., Delgado Bernal, 2002; Lynn, Yosso, Solórzano, & Parker, 2002; Solórzano, 1998).

As this work has expanded within the field of education, a pattern among CRT scholars has been to use various tenets of CRT, which according to Delgado and Stefancic (2012), "contains an activist dimension . . . [which] tries not only to understand our social situation but to change it" (p. 7). Although the tenets that make up CRT in education are not new, once combined and used together, they "seek to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the subordination of people of color" (Solórzano, 1998, p. 123). The first tenet is that racism is permanent (albeit worth trying to disrupt) (Bell, 1991) and fabricated in our everyday lives in a way that makes it normal in our daily experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As a result, it is difficult to pinpoint racism both at the individual and systemic levels. Next, CRT challenges dominant and traditional ideologies such as meritocracy, color-blindness, and objectivity. The third tenet is the commitment to social justice, which (Matsuda, 1991) noted as, "work[ing] toward[s] the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination" (p. 1331). The next tenet recognizes the legitimacy of the voices of people of color. Indeed, counterstories are critical as they differentiate and challenge the master narrative that is typically centered on Whiteness. The final tenet is the interdisciplinary perspective, which we used in this brief to analyze the ways that race and racism in education have established unequal standards for postsecondary institutions and disadvantaged HSIs within research and policy. Drawing from each of these tenets allowed us to illuminate the various ways that structural and cultural aspects of education reinforce the subjection and inferiority of HSIs, which we argue are racialized spaces that are scrutinized and criticized as a result of being compared to White normative standards for institutions of higher education. Here we challenge the dominant narrative about how postsecondary institutions are supposed to operate.

Research Approach

The *Midwest HSI Study* is a project focused on understanding the phenomenon of postsecondary institutions becoming *eligible* HSIs while developing a "Latinx-serving" organizational identity (Garcia, 2017). Using a multiple case study approach, the project aims to understand the process of becoming an HSI in a large metropolitan city and the ways in which organizational members make sense of this emergent organizational identity. A multiple case study was ideal as it allowed us to explore the phenomenon under study; in this case, *becoming Latinx-serving*. First we collected data from three institutions in the Midwest that are federally designated as HSIs. The three range in the percentage of Latinx undergraduate students enrolled, from 27%-85%, and also enroll a large percentage of other students of color. They are institutionally diverse, with two being private and one being public, and two being small and one being midsize. They are also diverse in their histories as HSIs, with one being founded as a bilingual English-Spanish institution, one being an HSI for over 20 years, and one only recently becoming an HSI. With this diversity, we observed the phenomenon at each individual site through the use of extensive data collection methods, including interviews, document analysis, and observations (Yin, 2009). In order to develop this research brief we pulled data from these sources and then made sense of the phenomenon across the three sites.

For this report we used a critical race methodology known as counterstorytelling (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The goal in using this methodology was to disrupt the master narrative about HSIs being "lesser than" non-HSIs. The master narrative about institutions of higher education are constructed by researchers, administrators, and legislators based on ranking systems such as the one developed by *U.S. News and World Report*. The belief is that these types of ranking systems are accurate, objective forms of legitimacy in higher education. What they do, however, is reify a false perception of what makes some colleges "good" and others "less desirable." Like people of color in the United States, HSIs possess less power and prestige among postsecondary institutions, yet this perception of their supposedly limited legitimacy has nothing to do with their real value within the larger system of education.

In using a critical race methodology, we accounted for the role of race and racism in education by recognizing that both are endemic and permanent (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and play a large role in the current framing of HSIs in policy and research. Even further, we sought to challenge the dominant ideology and false meritocracy that places HSIs and other racialized institutions at the lower levels of a stratified postsecondary educational system while seeking social justice for these institutions. Specifically, we centered our analysis on the experiential knowledge of minoritized people within HSIs, including students, faculty, staff, and administrators of color. As suggested by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), we constructed our counterstories as composites based on various forms of data including one-on-one interviews with participants, existing literature on HSIs, ethnographic observations, and secondary document reviews. We also grounded our composite stories in our theoretical notions about what it means to become "Latinx-serving" (Garcia, 2016, in press). As we analyzed these various forms of data, we developed counterstory composites that are factual and grounded in data, yet conveyed as fictional scenarios (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through these counterstories, we were able to answer our main question guiding this research brief by creating an image of what a "Latinized" postsecondary institution might look like. We were then able to make recommendations for policy and practice about the ways in which institutions can operate through a Latinx-centric lens.

Research Context

The *Midwest HSI Study* is situated within one large metropolitan city in the United States: Chicago, Illinois. We focused on Chicago because of the increasing number of both two-year and four-year HSIs in the city, which range in longevity as HSIs as well as type. Some HSIs in Chicago emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s with varying levels of intentionality, while others emerged in the last few years. The institutional diversity of HSIs in Chicago is notable, with the eligible HSIs ranging from two-year to four-year, public to private, and open access to more selective. There is also a significant number of emerging HSIs in Chicago, meaning they enroll between 15-24% Latinx students (*Excelencia in Education,* 2016a). In choosing the sites for this project, we found that the HSIs and emerging HSIs in Chicago ranged in their commitment to serving Latinx students, with some embracing this designation and others keeping it "closeted" (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008) or failing to even recognize this designation. Chicago provides an important context for this study because its HSIs appear to have emerged as a result of the historical, political, and educational contexts of the city (Garcia & Hudson, 2017). Understanding these contexts as racialized is important, as they have implications for the further racialization of HSIs as institutions and, by extension, the racialization of the people within them.

An HSI Counterstory: What Does it Mean to Be a "Latinized" Institution?

The burgeoning body of literature on HSIs paints a complex story about the history, mission, and purpose of these institutions as well as the outcomes and experiences of those students who attend HSIs. Although a majority of HSIs were not founded with the original purpose to serve Latinx students, the history of these institutions is important, as they emerged as a result of grassroots efforts on the part of institutional leaders and legislators who were committed to increasing the success of one of the fastest growing populations within postsecondary institutions—Latinx students (Valdez, 2015). So while many were not founded with a mission to serve Latinx students, the existence of pioneers who fought for the inclusion of HSIs in the Higher Education Act under Title III and later Title V suggests that there was a level of intentionality with regard to serving Latinx students. Even further, authors have highlighted that some HSIs have historically worked towards establishing culturally relevant practices that serve Latinx students (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015) while other eligible and soon-to-be HSIs are working with some intentionality in order to prepare for the crossing of the 25% enrollment threshold of Latinx students (Torres & Zerquera, 2012).

To complicate the story, however, scholars have highlighted that while HSIs may be committed to access and diversity, they often do not incorporate a specific focus on Latinx students within their mission statement (Contreras et al., 2008). Some have used this lack of mission and purpose to serve Latinx students as a way to critique HSIs for having low persistence and graduation rates (Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Contreras et al., 2008). Others have argued vehemently that negative student outcomes at HSIs are the result of racism and White-centric policies and practice that are embedded within the structures of HSIs (Greene & Oesterreich, 2012; Ledesma & Burciaga, 2015). Research on HSIs has also come to show that when outcomes and experiences at HSIs are compared to those at non-HSIs, the HSI effect is minimal, at best, meaning that the outcomes and experiences are similar at non-HSIs (Hubbard & Stage, 2009; Nelson Laird, Bridges, Morelon-Quainoo, Williams, & Holmes, 2007).

The various perspectives on HSIs and diverse approaches to studying them have complicated the perspective that scholars, practitioners, and legislators have of these institutions. While the counterstory that we present may further convolute our understanding of HSIs, the goal is to paint a picture of an alternative postsecondary institution: one that values Latinx students; centers the experiences of Latinx students; strives to enhance the educational, social, and cultural experiences of Latinx students; and operates from a Latinx-centric lens. We call this a "Latinized" institution, a term inspired by Sherry-Torres (2016) who conceptualized what the city of Pittsburgh, which is historically White, would look like if it were Latinized.

Nayeli Sanchez, a reporter who founded an outreach program for urban youth in Chicago, narrates this counterstory by writing a story about what it is like to attend an HSI in the city:

> It was 8:30 a.m., Monday morning. Luz guided me through the hall and into her office, a small room with a large window behind her desk. She sat at her desk with her back to the window and I sat on the opposite side, facing her and the morning light.

As we sat down to talk about her experiences as an academic counselor at Sol College, she offered me some coffee, "*Es temprano. Quieres café?* I'm sorry; do you speak Spanish?"

"Yes, I do. No worries" I answered.

Luz responded, "I'm sorry, I'm just used to speaking with my students and colleagues in Spanish. Most of the time that's just more comfortable for us. We understand each other better that way and sometimes students are able to express what they're feeling and going through more easily that way. Plus, we are a bilingual institution."

I immediately responded, "Of course, I completely understand."

"*Bueno, y el café? Quieres un poquito?*"

"*Pues, esta bien. Gracias,*" I responded in acceptance of her offer. As she stepped out to the tiny suite kitchen, I glanced over my notes. Luz came back into the room and handed me a small cup of hot coffee, black. "*Muchas gracias,*" I said as I took the warm cup into my hands.

"*Ahora sí.* Let's start. What would you like to know about my job?" Luz asked, ready to begin the interview.

"Well, can you tell me about how you came to be in your position as an academic counselor and what your job involves?" I asked. Luz looked down at her own cup of coffee for a moment and sighed. She looked back up at me, gave me a small grin that signaled to me she had lots to say.

She began: "Well, that's a lot. It is a broad question. I have been at Sol College for five years. I myself was once a student here; I earned my associates in psychology here. When I came from Colombia as a teenager I wanted to go to college but I never

thought I could. My family did not have the money and I didn't speak English. I heard about Sol College from people at church. That is still how we recruit—mostly word of mouth—our students tell other people in their communities about us. Because of Sol College I was able to move forward and earn a bachelor's and a master's degree from another college here in the city. Coming to Sol College and making it through gave me the confidence to say, 'yes, I can do this, I belong here, I am going to do it.'

"When it comes to what I do for students, as an academic counselor, we do a lot of what I experienced myself as a student here. That is why when I got the chance to work at Sol, I took advantage of the opportunity; I wanted to give back. Even though it is tough working here because we support students holistically, with family, financial, and academic issues—the students here work just as hard as we do. Most of our students are Latinas and Latinos. They are first-generation college students and they have families—the ones they came from and the ones they have started themselves—that rely on them. They are non-traditional students. They are parents, which is why offering very affordable childcare is important to us at Sol College. Our students just do not have the social capital that other students may have coming into college. Most of our students did not plan to attend college and probably never saw themselves as college students. They never thought they would fit into or achieve in college.

"Our job at Sol is to show them that they can do it, that they do belong here and will succeed. My job—and really the job of all staff and administrators here at Sol—is to support students as they transition into and through college, helping them learn what is expected of them as college students. For example, I teach a course for first-year students who are first generation, low income, and from the local neighborhoods in Chicago. While supporting students is our job, and we want them to persist and graduate, we also show appreciation for the cultural capital and knowledge that students bring with them to Sol. We do this primarily through language, both in the classroom and beyond, but we do it in other ways too. We hold student appreciation events every semester to show that we value our students. The childcare service also shows that we value our students and the wellness of their families. At Sol, we see ourselves as a stepping-stone into higher education for our students. And we truly believe that when students earn a degree from Sol, it lifts their entire family, both socially and economically. Even further, other family members begin to see the value of education, which increases the student's chances of pursuing an advanced degree. We even have mothers and their daughters attending classes together. It's fun."

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It's now Friday morning, and my story about HSIs in Chicago is due to my editor by tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. I have struggled to find a good time to meet with Victoria, an undocumented student in her junior year at Sol College. She works two jobs and commutes to campus by bus, an hour ride from her home in a predominantly Latinx neighborhood in the center of the city to the campus located on the north side of town. We finally sit down at a coffee shop about one mile from campus. I'm starving, so I order a breakfast Panini and coffee, black, no cream, no sugar.

While I quickly eat my sandwich, Victoria sips on hot tea with a dash of honey and milk. "I normally take the bus to campus, but today I took an Uber because I was running late and didn't want to miss our interview," she says.

I respond, "Oh no, can I pay for your Uber? I don't want to inconvenience you." When we spoke on the phone to set up the interview, she informed me that she comes from a low-income household where both of her parents earn minimum wage. Like many other students attending HSIs in the city, she receives financial aid and is fortunate enough to attend college in a state

that not only offers in-state tuition for undocumented students but also has a scholarship program that does not require citizenship.

"No, no, it's OK, I don't mind," says Victoria. "I am excited to talk to you. This week has been hectic, as my mom got sick and I had to take my little brother to school before going to my job at the library. But the topic of your story is so important. I love attending a Hispanic Serving Institution and want to share my story with you."

"*Pues*, let's begin," I say as I finish my sandwich and take a quick sip of the coffee, which is a bit more bold than I prefer. "I don't want to keep you longer than necessary. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and what it's like to attend Sol College?"

She pushes her tea aside and rolls her eyes towards the ceiling, as if wondering where she should begin, and then says, "Well, I was born in Guerrero, Mexico, but moved to the United States with my family at the age of three. I am undocumented. I haven't been back to Guerrero since I was three and don't really know much about it, other than the stories my mom and dad tell me. I didn't know I was undocumented until my family and I took a vacation in upstate New York and accidentally drove across the Canadian border. My dad had a lot of explaining to do but somehow got us safely back into the States.

"Since arriving at Sol College, I have been active with the student group for undocumented students. We provide a safe space for undocumented students and create awareness for their needs. We have students from Southeast Asia, Mexico, Central America, the Philippines, and even one from Uganda. We all share a common identity: undocumented and unafraid. I also volunteer with Salazar High School's mentoring group, where I encourage youth of color to apply to college and specifically to Sol College, mostly because I love it here and I am always talking highly of it. I want everyone to have a college experience like mine, especially Latina/o youth. Let's see, what else? I'm a sociology major with a minor in Latina/o Studies, or LLS. After taking the introductory LLS course, I became fascinated with the material I was learning so I decided to pick up the minor. What time is it? I have class at 10 a.m. on LLS History and Government."

I tell her, "It's 9:26, do you want me to walk with you to your class? We can continue to talk along the way." I figured this was my one opportunity to see the campus before my story was due to my editor.

"Yes, can you? That would be perfect," Victoria says. "Can we meet my friend Inez on the way, we always go to class together?"

"Of course," I tell her, "*Vamos*."

We meet Inez along the way, who quickly introduces herself to me. She tells me that her and Victoria met through a program for low-income students that helps them adjust to college. As we walk, Victoria points out various artifacts to me and provides commentary. "See those 'Undocumented Students are Welcome Here' signs? Every time I see those I am immediately reminded of why I decided to attend Sol College. Those safe zone stickers are everywhere! She turns to Inez, "Think about it, how many schools have safe zone stickers or anything like it?"

Inez says, "My primo goes to Windy University and he says it's very unwelcoming there, for Latina and Latino students, and especially undocumented students. Despite all the activism in the state, with the passing of the Illinois DREAM Act and what not, that stuck-up university pretends like undocumented students and students of color don't exist. Or at least like they should exist in the same ways as the White, U.S.-born students from the suburbs. *Chale*, I'm not down with that."

Victoria and Inez walk through the building corridor where they see, among other student groups, the Muslim Student Association, Asian American Student Association, and Latinos/as Juntos setting up tables. While Sol College primarily enrolls post-traditional commuter students who don't always have time to get involved in student organizations, it has been more intentional about supporting student groups over the last few years, as these groups have been shown to increase students' sense of belonging on campus. Most of the groups have few members, but they continue to operate with the help of a few dedicated students.

Victoria and Inez walk past Mikala, a woman wearing a hijab, who calls out, "*Que onda* Victoria, are you still coming to volunteer at our table after class?"

"*Sí*," replies Victoria as she runs to class.

It is now 11:08 a.m. and Victoria and Inez see me sitting on a bench in the hallway. They wave and tell me about class. "I love Professor Sandoval," says Victoria. "He always challenges us to think about how government policies affect our *comunidad*; shit I never thought about in high school. He also highlights how historical policies have created systemic stratification of different groups of people based solely on their social identities. That's messed up! But learning about history and politics empowers me to help my people in my own way."

She turns to me and says, "I know you have to go soon Ms. Sanchez, what else can I tell you about my experience here at Sol College? I have a few more minutes to talk before I have to help my student organization and then head to Salazar High School to meet with my mentees."

"No worries," I say, "I have learned a lot just by being on campus. But if there is anything else you want to add about your experience, please do."

Victoria smiles and says, "When I arrived here at Sol College, I was a bit overwhelmed with the thought of going to college, especially with the thought of financing my education and my status as an undocumented student. Also, I still had not come out as a lesbian to my parents and I wasn't sure how welcoming the campus would be to an 'undocuqueer' woman like me. It turned out, however, that there are resources on campus that cater to each of my different identities! There are student organizations that let me know that I belong here. There is also a center for undocumented students, one of like five in the whole country. The director is amazing, she's so loving and caring. She went to Sol College as well, and gives her time and energy unconditionally because she wants to help us.

"The financial aid office has also been helpful. Thank goodness for all the aid and local scholarships made available to me. I never thought I could afford to attend college, but the counselors there are committed to helping every student realize their potential. The counselor I always see, Jorge, tells me that there are thousands of dollars in aid that go unclaimed each year. I think his mission in life is to make sure all that unclaimed money goes to people who need it. He gives class presentations and talks to students regularly. And he speaks Spanish so if your mom has a question, he can talk to her too—he even called my mom a few times! He tried to convince her to enroll in a few classes here at Sol. She's thinking about it, now that she knows there are classes offered in Spanish.

"Gosh, what else can I tell you? I just love it here. Even my White professors are all conscious, acknowledging and critiquing their White privilege and stuff. Every time that I walk by their offices I find myself looking at new stickers that they have posted up on their doors. The office doors serve as political sounding boards around here. You can tell a lot about a professor based on what they have posted on their door. Some are in support of undocumented students; some stand against racism; and some just hate Donald Trump. That's cool! Since none of my classes are

huge lecture halls, my professors also know my name. Ever since I got here, I have felt comfortable visiting professors during office hours and asking them questions if I am confused about anything. It's a community of students, professors, and administrators and it provides me with a strong sense of belonging. What more can I say? This place is like home, but better. I can be me without fear. I wish all Latinas could have this experience. More would probably graduate high school and go to college if they knew places like Sol existed."

Victoria looks at her watch and bids me farewell. As she runs off, I take notes in my journal, thinking back to my experience in college. I attended a predominantly White institution in the Midwest, about two hours from home. And while there were resources on campus that made me feel less homesick than when I first arrived on campus, I never felt the way I felt for the last few hours on campus at Sol College. It's hard to fully describe the environment; the people; the students. It's more than just the buildings or physical spaces that make this place feel Latinized. It's a collection of resources and people and the overall environment that has made me feel whole. Perhaps being at a Latinized institution feels like you don't have to give up a piece of yourself every time you step on campus. You can just arrive as you are and be accepted. But even further, perhaps a Latinized institution is validating, culturally enriching, and transformative in a unique way that is hard to capture without fully experiencing it.

Recommendations for Practice

While the data collected through the *Midwest HSI Study* has implications for practice, there are numerous examples of currently enacted practices that are working for HSIs in the Midwest. *Excelencia in Education*'s "Growing What Works Database" highlights many of these programs, including a bilingual Bachelor of Social Work program at Saint Augustine College and a Transitional Bilingual Learning Community

(TBLC) at City Colleges of Chicago-Harry S. Truman College. Both institutions provide transitional language courses for English learners, with the goal of increasing the overall achievement of Latinx students who are Spanish dominant. These institutions recognize that English learning programs dissipate at the college level, yet the need is still great, especially for people who immigrate to the United States later in life. Even further, they recognize that language should not be a barrier to an advanced education. These types of English transitional programs are essential to better serve Latinx students at the postsecondary level and should be developed further at HSIs. As noted in the HSI counterstory, bilingual English-Spanish faculty and staff are also valuable at HSIs and may provide comfort for students as well as the faculty and staff themselves. Latinx people should not have to give up an important piece of themselves, language, simply because they enter postsecondary education—a Latinized institution recognizes this; it values and reinforces language.

The "Growing What Works Database" also highlights student support programs that are working at HSIs in the Midwest, including the Proyecto Pa'Lante program at Northeastern Illinois University and the LARES (Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services) Program at University of Illinois at Chicago. Both programs assist students as they transition into the university setting. Proyecto Pa'Lante program offers outreach services, tutoring, advising, and a three-credit course that helps students develop the skills necessary to survive in college. In similar fashion, LARES offers recruitment and outreach services, orientation, academic advising, tutoring, supplemental instruction, and graduate school preparation. Both programs have a long history and track record dating back to the 1970s. There are also examples of programs that focus on increasing the pipeline into graduate level education, including the Hispanic Center for Excellence at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the INSPIRE program at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine, and the ENLACE Leadership Institute at Northeastern Illinois University. While the Hispanic Center for Excellence and the INSPIRE program have pre-college outreach

programs and undergraduate research programs, the overall goal is to increase the pipeline of Latinx students into graduate school and ultimately into the health professions. Similarly, the goal of the ENLACE program is to prepare higher education leaders and administrators who understand the needs of Latinx college students and who can practice through a culturally relevant lens.

While these program often serve a small percentage of Latinx and other minoritized students on campus, they have an important mission. Rather than expecting Latinx students, who may also be first generation and low income, to know what it takes to succeed in college, these programs meet students where they are and operate through a Latinx-centric lens. As suggested in the counterstory, these student support programs are essential, not only because they provide students with the skills necessary to succeed in college but also because they provide a space for social interactions that students need. A Latinized institution recognizes the value of these programs and uses its resources to scale up the efforts of these programs so that all students, not just Latinx students, experience them. Rather than expecting one or two programs to do all the heavy lifting, all institutions of higher education should learn from these programs and train other staff members and faculty to advise, mentor, and support students in similar ways.

In addition to these well-established programs that seem to be working for HSIs and Latinx students, the counterstory suggests that HSIs might benefit from reconsidering their recruitment practices. At Sol College, a majority of recruitment is done through community networks, such as churches and non-profit organizations, which prospective students are part of and trust. Even further, the college relies on word-of-mouth recruitment, meaning that family members and friends tell other people in their kin networks about the institution. While existing research has suggested that when students of color have a positive experience in college they are more likely to succeed and graduate, what this narrative suggests is that they are also more likely to promote the institution to others in their networks.

Finally, the counterstory has important implications for hiring practices at HSIs. With this narrative, we suggest that a Latinized institution should hire faculty, staff, and administrators that are not only conscious of the type of discrimination and oppression that minoritized students have historically faced in the United States but that also that they should embrace an ethic of care. While there is criticism that HSIs continue to hire and tenure White people, which reinforces White dominant ways of knowing, the data here suggest that White educators can and should do the important work of disrupting Whiteness at HSIs. Latinized institutions should certainly make an effort to recruit, hire, retain, and perhaps grow their own faculty and staff of color, but they should also do the same for White educators who are allies and who are committed to being anti-racist. Even further, it is essential that the faculty, staff, and administrators at HSIs understand and resist how institutions continue to be evaluated based on White normative standards. Trying to move up the proverbial pecking order should not be the priority of constituents at HSIs; instead, recognizing and valuing racialized students for who they are should be priority.

Policy Recommendations

In understanding that HSIs are designated as such by the federal government, it is important to recognize that an organizational identity for serving Latinx students is constructed by and with the federal government (Garcia, 2013a). While the counterstory in this research brief does not fully address this reality, it is an important consideration since institutions that receive federal funding through the Developing HSIs program act in a certain way based on what is valued by funding agencies. Federal agencies, therefore, construct a Latinx-serving identity through their request for proposal (RFP) process. Institutions that pursue federal funding further construct a Latinx-serving identity based on the development of grant proposals that fit the RFP. For example, if an agency wants to increase the pipeline of students into STEM programs and funds these types of programs, HSIs will construct an identity for serving Latinx students tailored to fit that STEM-specific

mission. As noted by Santiago et al. (2016), there are only 16 allowable activities for enhancing an HSI's institutional capacity for serving students, with a majority of the funds being designated for activities that enhance students' academic achievement (support services), faculty and curriculum development, and administrative management.

Federal policies and priorities must recognize the extent to which they encourage the use of a Latinx-centric lens that will benefit all students, not just the ones that have a specific academic interest. Based on the counterstory in this report, we suggest that federal agencies rethink and reevaluate their calls for proposals and the ways in which grant monies are awarded. Specifically, the federal government needs to recognize how it continues to reinforce White normative ways of being for postsecondary institutions. While valuing outcomes such as graduation and persistence is important, there are alternative methods of success that Latinized institutions use that may ultimately contribute to these outcomes, including providing dual language support and transitional programs; outreach and support programs for low-income and first-generation students; increasing access to postsecondary education through community networks; and hiring, recruiting, and retaining faculty, staff, and administrators that challenge dominant ways of knowing and aim to disrupt White normative structure. What the federal government does and values dictates what HSIs will do; we challenge the federal government, therefore, to use a Latinx-centric lens when placing value on the ways in which HSIs operate.

Conclusion

With this research brief, we suggest that higher education scholars, practitioners, and legislators rethink and reframe the ways in which they approach the study, practice, and development of policies that affect the fastest growing type of MSIs in the United States: Hispanic Serving Institutions. Each year we see a steady increase in the number of institutions that identify as HSIs, yet we lack a clear understanding of what it means to serve Latinx students. We have argued that it is partially because we continue to expect HSIs to act like White institutions. Instead, we argue that HSIs should become Latinized, which means they should operate through an anti-racist, anti-normative, Latinx-centric lens that values the experiences, culture, and knowledge of racialized students. Rather than comparing HSIs to non-HSIs, higher education practitioners should create a model that values HSIs for the institutions that they are while recognizing that when we devalue institutions that enroll large percentages of racialized students, we ultimately devalue these students in the process.

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