Defined by Outcomes or Culture?
Constructing an Organizational Identity for Hispanic-Serving Institutions

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While Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) enroll at least 25% Latinx students, the perennial question facing HSIs is, "What does it mean for postsecondary institutions to be Latinx-serving"—essentially an organizational identity question. Guided by the extant literature on organizational identity, culture, and institutionalism and using an in-depth case study of a federally designated, four-year HSI, this study focused on the way members construct an organizational identity for serving Latinxs. Findings suggest that while members constructed an ideal Latinx-serving identity based on legitimized outcomes (i.e., graduation), they constructed their current identity from environmental cues about cultural practices. Using two theoretical lenses, I present a typology that considers outcomes and culture in a Latinx-serving identity. Future research should explore the construction of a Latinx-serving identity in a nuanced way.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are nonprofit postsecondary institutions with a population of at least 25% undergraduate Latinxs[1] that are *eligible*[2] for federal designation and grant funding. Not only are Latinxs changing the demographics of the United States, they are rapidly shifting the postsecondary landscape, quadrupling their participation rate from 1990 to 2014 (Kena et al., 2015). As more Latinxs enter college, the percentage of eligible HSIs is also increasing rapidly. Since HSIs first gained

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recognition from the federal government in the early 1990s, the number of eligible HSIs has more than doubled (Santiago, Taylor, & Calderón Galdeano, 2016), representing approximately 13% of all postsecondary institutions in 2014 (*Excelencia* in Education, 2016b). In the same year, 62% of Latinx college students were enrolled in HSIs (*Excelencia* in Education, 2016b), suggesting that they play an essential role in the postsecondary enrollment and success of this group. Embarking on the next 100 years of educational research, scholars would be remiss to overlook the need to understand how to serve Latinx college students and the significance of HSIs in this process.

The perennial question facing HSIs is, "What does it mean to be Latinx-serving?" I consider this to be an organizational identity question, which Albert and Whetten (1985) first conceptualized as the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of an organization. They suggested that the best way to understand an organizational identity is to ask organizational members, "Who are we as an organization?" For HSIs, the organizational identity question is, "Who are we as a *Latinx-serving* organization?" It is difficult for organizational members to answer this question, however, since most HSIs were not founded with the specific goal of serving Latinxs (MacDonald, Botti, & Clark, 2007; Olivas, 1982). Instead, HSIs were first recognized with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) in 1992 (MacDonald et al., 2007; Santiago, 2006) and defined strictly by enrollment. As the number of institutions eligible for federal designation as HSIs has increased, scholars have questioned the extent to which "enrolling" equates to "serving."

With HSIs gaining notoriety as a specific institutional type, it is essential that educational researchers explore what I refer to as a "Latinx-serving identity" (Garcia, 2016). In practice, making sense of this organizational identity will determine how to support the educational growth and development of the fastest growing racial/ethnic group in higher education in the 21st century. The purpose of this study was to explore the construction of an organizational identity for HSIs, guided by the research question:

> *Research Question:* In what ways do administrators, faculty, staff, and students at an HSI construct a Latinx-serving organizational identity?

What Does It Mean to Be Latinx-Serving?

The challenge of studying the organizational identity of HSIs is that a Latinx-serving identity has not been clearly defined in higher education research. Moreover, the diversity of HSIs complicates this endeavor as HSIs range from two-year to four-year, private to public, small to large, and enrolling anywhere between 25% and 98% Latinx students. Núñez and Elizondo (2012) also note that there is tremendous diversity in

geographic location as well as types and numbers of degrees awarded at HSIs. As such, I pulled from the extant literature on HSIs to make sense of the ways that scholars have conceptualized a Latinx-serving identity beyond enrollment, finding that outcomes and culture are two variables worth considering.

Defined by Outcomes?

Research suggests that a Latinx-serving identity could be defined by outcomes. For example, some studies show that graduation rates for Latinxs at four-year HSIs are not equitable to non-HSIs (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008) and that the percentage of Latinx students, faculty, and administrators at HSIs does not significantly predict their graduation rates (Garcia, 2013b). What these studies suggest is that inequitable graduation outcomes for Latinxs indicate that an institution is not serving students well. Others have found that enrollment in a four-year HSI does not account for differences between six-year graduation rates for Latinxs and Whites (Flores & Park, 2013). Moreover, when using advanced statistical procedures, there is very little difference in graduation rates of Latinxs attending four-year HSIs when compared to similarly matched non-HSIs (Flores & Park, 2015; Rodríguez & Calderón Galdeano, 2015). What these studies imply is that HSIs are in fact serving Latinx students well, as reflected in the graduation outcomes. While these scholars did not directly conceptualize a Latinx-serving identity in their studies, they made assumptions that outcomes are important indicators of serving Latinx students. Using outcomes to define a Latinx-serving identity, however, is complicated since they are different based on institutional type (i.e., transfer vs. graduation rates at two-year vs. four-year institutions).

Defined by Culture?

Another indicator of having a Latinx-serving identity could be based on espousing a culture for serving Latinxs. Culture in this sense reflects the social order, rules, and understandings that connect people within an organization (Schein, 2010). Research shows that the social order within HSIs may help Latinx students feel connected with faculty and staff on campus who speak Spanish (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004; Sebanc, Hernandez, & Alvarado, 2009) or foster the development of a salient racial/ethnic identity (Garcia, Patrón, Ramirez, & Hudson, 2016; Guardia & Evans, 2008). The culture may also lead Latinx students at HSIs to feel a sense of belonging on campus (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016; Maestas, Vaquera, & Muñoz Zehr, 2007). Even further, the culture may promote participation in ethnic studies curricula (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015) or experiences with culturally relevant pedagogy (Núñez, Murakami-Ramalho, & Cuero, 2010). Research also suggests that a culture for serving Latinx students is facilitated

by faculty, staff, and administrators who serve as institutional agents, actively working to disrupt barriers to success for Latinx students (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012; Garcia & Ramirez, 2015). Numerous scholars have highlighted the significance of these aspects of HSIs, suggesting that a Latinx-serving identity is connected to the culture.

Conceptualizing Organizational Identity

Following a review of the literature on HSIs, I began to conceptualize a Latinx-serving identity based on outcomes and culture. I also turned to the extant theoretical literature on organizational identity, a concept not fully understood by higher education scholars (Weerts, Freed, & Morphew, 2014). Albert and Whetten (1985) claim that an organizational identity is central, distinct, and enduring and based on institutional members' answers to the question, "Who are we as an organization?" While this definition seems straightforward, organizational theorists from different disciplines have spent decades conceptualizing and reconceptualizing organizational identity. Following Pedersen and Dobbin's (2006) lead, I drew on institutional and cultural theory to conceptualize organizational identity. Pedersen and Dobbin (2006) noted that most organizations strive for legitimacy (as suggested by institutional theory) while aiming for uniqueness (as expressed within cultural theory); therefore, in order to make sense of a Latinx-serving identity, I connected institutional theory with cultural theory, which closely aligned with the way I was making sense of a Latinx-serving identity based on outcomes and culture.

Organizational Identity From an Institutional Lens

One way to understand the construction of an organizational identity is through the principles of institutional theory, whereby an organization's self-categorization is dependent on the context and based on social norms established by the field (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). From this perspective, organizations develop an identity based on their conception of self in comparison to other organizations, with an inherent need to establish legitimacy by adopting recognizable forms (Pedersen & Dobbin, 2006; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Additionally, identity is connected to the way organizations follow ceremonial norms (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) and conform to coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures to be like other institutions in their field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). From this perspective, an organizational identity is constructed based on consistent and legitimate narratives that founders and subsequent leaders provide for members about their collective sense of self (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). From an institutional perspective, members construct an organizational identity based on what Gonzales (2013) calls "legitimized ways of knowing" or those developed in a highly established field such as higher education.

Organizational Identity Constructed From a Cultural Lens

A second way to understand the construction of an organizational identity is through the lens of cultural theory. From this perspective, organizational members make meaning of their collective identity with little regard for other organizations within their environment. Although some argue that organizational identity should be conceptualized separate from culture (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000), others believe that they are hard to distinguish. Hatch and Schultz (1997) contend that "culture is not another variable to be manipulated, but rather a context within which identity is established, maintained, and changed" (p. 363). The cultural context includes the tacit assumptions, beliefs, and values that members use to make meaning of their organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Furthermore, Whetten (2006) posits that when identity is portrayed as a unique property of an organization, members will invoke identity claims that are central, enduring, and distinct aspects of the culture. While numerous studies have examined the culture of postsecondary institutions, I specifically used the theory to understand how members make meaning of an organizational identity, not to describe the actual culture.

Research Design

In order to explore the construction of a Latinx-serving identity, I employed a single-case design that allowed me to gather in-depth information about a representative or typical case (Yin, 2009). A case study was most appropriate because it allowed me to collect extensive data while "investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Research Setting

Naranja State University (NSU, a pseudonym) was founded in the late 1950s as an institution intended to serve the residents of the rapidly growing region. As a state institution, NSU assumed the identity of a liberal arts college focused on teaching and learning. As student enrollment soared, few students of color enrolled. By the 1990s, however, the demographics of the surrounding region had shifted dramatically, with the Latinx and Asian populations surging and the White population falling to the minority. As an institution that served its region, the student population at NSU began to reflect these changes. In particular, the Latinx population on campus grew at a steady rate, eventually reaching the 25% threshold for becoming an HSI. By the early 2000s, NSU received federal designation and several HSI grants from various federal agencies. There was, however, a lack of conversation about what it meant to be Latinx-serving. With the arrival of several key administrators, there was a shift in the campus's efforts to make sense of the HSI identity (see Garcia & Ramirez, 2015).

NSU's history suggests that like many other HSIs, it was shaped by the changing demographics in its region. It is important to note, however, that NSU has been intentional in actively applying for HSI grants. As suggested by Flores and Park (2015), even the voluntary adoption of the HSI designation for the purpose of applying for HSI grants suggests some level of commitment to serving Latinx students, particularly since HSI grants are capacity building grants intended to serve the entire community, not just one faculty member's research. As such, NSU was an appropriate site for this study. The site was also chosen for its compositional diversity when data collection began in fall 2012, with 35% Latinx students, 29% White students, 11% Asian American students, 6% Black students, and 19% other. Although the number of Latinx students enrolling continues to increase, the diversity of the faculty, staff, and administration has not kept up with these changes. In 2011, tenured and tenure-track Latinx faculty represented approximately 11% of the faculty, with many situated within ethnic studies departments. Additionally, the highest level Latina administrator was not hired until 2011. Recognizing that structural change takes time, NSU was still a good site for this study as it was actively involved in constructing its Latinx-serving identity when data collection began.

Limitations of Design

One of the most cited limitations of a case study is the lack of generalizability of the findings (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). In order to address this limitation, I used a typology developed by Núñez, Crisp, and Elizondo (2016) to better situate the site among the population of HSIs. Núñez and colleagues systematically examined the entire population of both two- and four-year HSIs in the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico and presented a typology inclusive of six types of HSIs. In doing this, they provided researchers with a way to compare HSIs beyond the Carnegie classification system. Within this typology, NSU is considered a Big Systems Four Year institution, which are typically large, public, master's-granting institutions that are part of a larger system of institutions. They represent 21% of all HSIs. With this in mind, I recognize that the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other types of HSIs; however, as suggested by Yin (2009), findings from a case study should be used to make analytic generalizations in which the case is used to test, challenge, and contribute to current theoretical understandings. As such, I used institutional and cultural theory to guide this research, with the goal of developing a preliminary theory for understanding the conceptualization of a Latinx-serving identity.

Data Sources

I collected data from four sources: (1) interviews with administrators, faculty, and student affairs staff; (2) focus groups with students; (3)

Table 1
Participants by Position and Race (*n* = 88)

	Latinx	Black	Asian American	White	Total
Central administrators	1	1	0	4	6
Faculty					
Administrators	2	0	1	1	4
Professors	7	1	0	11	19
Student affairs staff					
Administrators	0	1	0	2	3
Coordinator/counselor	8	3	0	4	15
Students	29	5	5	2	41
Total	47	11	6	24	88

documents; and (4) nonparticipant observations. I relied on the interviews and focus groups as the main source of data regarding the construction of a Latinx-serving identity while using documents and observations for triangulation, thus increasing the validity of the study (Merriam, 2009). In order to ensure a diverse sample by race/ethnicity, position, and experiences and in order to guarantee information-rich cases that yield in-depth understanding and insight, I used a purposeful sampling technique (Patton, 2002). I identified potential participants through the institution's website and organized them by position and department. I emailed potential participants and asked them to commit to a 60- to 90-minute interview to be conducted in person.

In total, I interviewed 88 participants, including 13 administrators from various divisions, 19 tenured or tenure-track professors across all ranks, and 15 student affairs staff in various positions. The sample also includes 41 students who participated in one of six focus groups ranging in size from 2 to 14 students or one of six one-on-one interviews, held specifically for those who could not attend a focus group. To maintain anonymity, all participants either chose their own pseudonym or were assigned one. Table 1 provides a summary of the 88 participants.

I used in-depth, semi-structured interviews, defined as those "with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomenon" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3). Questions that guided the study included: (1) What do you think it means to be "Hispanic-serving?" (2) In what ways are Latinxs represented on this campus? (3) How would you define organizational success as an HSI?

I also reviewed institutional documents as a way to better understand the organization's identity. I reviewed the mission and values statements

for the campus and the larger statewide system, historical archives, websites, and Facebook pages. I also analyzed the mission statements of individual academic departments and student services units. I used data provided by institutional research to learn about the demographics of students and faculty and about basic student outcomes. Furthermore, I used direct, nonparticipant observations to confirm data collected through the interviews and describe the setting, the people, and the activities that take place at the site (Patton, 2002). During observations, I took field notes about emerging ideas related to identity claims and cultural elements within the organization.

Analytic Procedures

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and imported to HyperRESEARCH 3.0.2. I also imported documents and field notes, which were used in the early analysis process. As suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1991), I used an iterative approach that incorporated extant literature, existing theories, and all data sources.

In the first iteration, I used an inductive process guided by naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I began the open coding process by identifying initial concepts found within a subset of the interviews and focus groups and then grouped these concepts into larger categories (Saldaña, 2009). I created both in vivo codes, or codes that use the actual words of the participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and codes based on the extant literature and theories guiding the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Throughout this process, I remained aware of all possibilities and interpretations of the data while systematically making sense of it (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Subsequently, I developed a preliminary typology for classifying the various ways that people constructed an identity for serving Latinx students.

In the second iteration, I created a codebook in HyperRESEARCH 3.0.2 and used it to code all the data. I then moved into a more purposeful description of the data that led to conceptual ordering and more specific theory development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through this process, I identified axial codes, or those that connect concepts and themes to one another, using a comparative process in which I coded similar incidents within the data under similar labels (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In using both inductive and deductive analysis procedures, I considered multiple stories within the data in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the construction of a Latinx-serving identity. Throughout the coding process, I also used analytic memos in order to keep track of all theoretical notions that arose from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

As I continued to develop the typology, I began to notice tensions in the ways an HSI organizational identity was constructed within various sources of data. As suggested by Contreras et al. (2008), this identity was closeted in

public spaces, such as the institution's website and mission statement, but much more pronounced in official documents, such as the federal grant applications I reviewed. There was also a growing recognition of the HSI designation, as noted in a feature article in the campus's official magazine for alumni and the community, which was published in summer 2012. These tensions were significant for the ways in which I made sense of the data. Rather than telling me what it meant for an institution *to be* Latinx-serving, participants constructed an *ideal* Latinx-serving identity while contrasting that ideal with the realities of their *current* identity.

Trustworthiness

As a researcher, I recognize that my identity as a Latina and my experiences attending and working at an HSI influence my decision to study HSIs. Even further, the way I view the world affects the way I approach research on HSIs, including the way I frame my study, analyze my data, and report my findings. For this study, I used a reflexive journal, which helped me track and reduce potential biases while enhancing the study's credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase trustworthiness, I also used multiple sources of data as a way to triangulate information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009), conducted member checks (Merriam, 2009), and consulted with a peer to help define and refine codes, which systematically increased reliability and consistency (Merriam, 2009; for full details, see Garcia, 2013a).

Findings

Participants constructed a Latinx-serving identity based on six indicators. First I present the construction of an ideal Latinx-serving identity, followed by a typology to be used to classify HSI organizational identities along multiple dimensions. Finally, I present members' construction of their current Latinx-serving identity, which I call *Latinx-enhancing*.

Ideal Latinx-Serving Identity

Participants constructed an ideal Latinx-serving identity based on desirable outcomes that stem from institutionalized ways of knowing. These include graduation, graduate school enrollment, and employment for Latinx students. They also constructed an ideal Latinx-serving identity based on their desire to create a culture that produces legitimized outcomes. This includes providing community engagement opportunities, a positive campus climate, and support programs. It is important to note that these six indicators are not necessarily unique to HSIs as many postsecondary institutions strive for them. Participants recognized this but continued to construct their Latinx-serving identity along these measures, stressing that these indicators should be specific to Latinx students.

Garcia

Graduation

Of the six total indicators that participants used to construct an ideal Latinx-serving identity, graduation was the most pronounced, with 31 people stressing the importance of graduating Latinx students. Rosie Moreno (Latina counselor) said,

> So I think graduation ultimately is the goal, getting them educated and out of here, out of [NSU], right? Not like we want to see them go, but just, that's the whole goal, that's the whole purpose of going to the university is to graduate and be successful in life.

Graduate School Enrollment

Nine participants suggested that enrollment in graduate programs should be considered an important indicator of a Latinx-serving identity. Nia Reynolds (Black administrator) stated,

> I would say commencement from undergrad degree and then really making sure that we're trying to put as many people into master's levels, whether they'd be at [NSU] or other institutions, as possible. I think that that's a huge measure of our success.

Employment

Success in the labor market upon graduation was a third indicator of a Latinx-serving identity, with 10 participants indicating its importance. Marisa Guzman (Latina student) suggested that HSIs should help students get experiential training that will ultimately lead to employment, stating, "I guess make internships more available, you know, or classes that actually help you [know] how to get a job, and not just teaching you the basics of everything. I mean that's what a [state university] is all about."

Community Engagement

Fourteen participants cited engagement with the community as an important indicator of a Latinx-serving identity. Dr. Devin Hoffman (White administrator) said,

> If we are to be successful here, there's no way we can be successful without being successful in the local-area schools, because if those kids are not doing well in those schools, then they can't come here and do well. So improving the community around us, including ourselves, is absolutely crucial.

Positive Campus Climate

Participants stated that having a positive campus climate for Latinxs would also be indicative of a Latinx-serving identity, with eight participants noting its importance. American Vida (Latina program coordinator) said,

> A lot of it also has to do with the atmosphere and the culture that you create with the campus environment that you have, creating the consciousness of us being an HSI, I think that's the true measure of success.

Support Programs

Finally, 10 participants constructed an ideal Latinx-serving identity as connected to support programs for Latinxs. Nia Reynolds (Black administrator) said,

> I think that the other part of serving as an [HSI] means that we need to provide the support services that those students need. And I'm not saying all students who are Latino need these specific support services, but I'm saying in general, I think students need support services.

Typology of HSI Organizational Identities

Exploring these six ideal indicators of being Latinx-serving and using two theoretical lenses allowed me to develop a typology to classify HSI identities along two dimensions (see Figure 1). The typology highlights the multifaceted nature of organizational identities at HSIs. Rather than assuming that there is one way to be Latinx-serving, this typology views organizational identities of HSIs as constructed along two axes: one focused on institutionalized measures of success (organizational outcomes for Latinx students) and one focused on deeply embedded assumptions and values (organizational culture that facilitates outcomes for Latinx students).

Latinx-enrolling represents an organizational identity constructed by members to mean that the institution simply enrolls a minimum of 25% Latinx students but does not produce an equitable number of legitimized outcomes for Latinx students and does not have an organizational culture for supporting Latinxs on campus. A *Latinx-producing* identity would be constructed based on the institution enrolling the minimum 25% Latinx students and producing a significant (if not equitable) number of legitimized outcomes for Latinx students, despite the lack of a culture for supporting Latinxs. A *Latinx-enhancing* identity would be constructed as an organizational identity based on enrolling a minimum 25% Latinx students and enacting a culture that enhances the educational experience of Latinx students but not producing an equitable number of outcomes for Latinx students. The final identity, *Latinx-serving*, may be constructed by members at an institution that enrolls the minimum 25% Latinx students, produces an equitable

Organizational Outcomes for Latinxs	High	Latinx-Producing	Latinx-Serving
	Low	Latinx-Enrolling	Latinx-Enhancing
		Low	High
		Organizational Culture Reflects Latinxs	

Figure 1. **Typology of Hispanic-Serving Institution organizational identities.**

number of legitimized outcomes, and enacts a culture that is educationally enhancing and welcoming.

Based on this typology, I argue that for an organization to have a Latinx-serving identity, it should have high productivity (in regard to legitimized outcomes) and provide a culture that enhances the experience of Latinx students. While the six indicators used to develop the typology most accurately reflect participants' construction of "who we want to be" (ideal Latinx-serving identity), they also talked extensively about "who we currently are." I therefore used the typology to understand how NSU members constructed their current identity as Latinx-enhancing (for more details, see Garcia, 2016; Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015).

Currently Constructed Identity: Latinx-Enhancing

Although organizational members made sense of ideal indicators of a Latinx-serving identity, the central, distinct, and enduring aspects of NSU's organizational identity were not fully aligned with these ideals. Some participants stressed that NSU does not yet have a clear Latinx-serving identity, does not fully espouse the values necessary to be Latinx-serving, and does not enact this identity in a consistent way, while others were more confident in NSU's progression toward becoming Latinx-serving. These tensions are presented next as a way to understand how NSU members constructed their current identity as Latinx-enhancing.

Graduation

Of the 31 participants who talked about graduation as an ideal indicator of a Latinx-serving identity, 7 were more specific about the idea of equitable graduation rates for Latinx students. These participants were more critical of NSU's HSI designation, stating things like, "I think the benchmark for me and the provost is when there is no academic gap and [when] we're retaining [Latinx] students at the same rate as all other students, because right now we're not" (Dr. Rita Diaz, Latina administrator). The organizational members

who were critical of NSU's identity as an HSI based their criticism on six-year graduation rates, which for the 2006 cohort were 58% for White students and 44% for Latinx students, a clear sign of inequities. As long as organizational members doubt that there is equity in graduation, they are not likely to construct their identity as Latinx-serving.

Graduate School Enrollment

Although nine participants suggested that post-baccalaureate enrollment was an important indicator of a Latinx-serving identity, few answered the question, "Who we are as an organization?" along these lines. Student participants, however, pulled from cultural cues within the environment to make sense of this ideal identity. In talking about the aspects of NSU's culture that make it feel Latinx-serving, Javier Gomez (Latino student) stressed that until enrolling at NSU, he had never been in an educational setting where Latinx students pursued advanced degrees.

> I went to the library the other day with some, to meet up with some friends, and there were three graduate students, Latina girls, you know, going for their master's degrees. And I mean, I have never seen that in my life. I know it happens out there, but I mean, just me personally, it's not something that I see a lot. Before [NSU] I did one semester at the community college and it was primarily Latinos and the high school I went to was primarily Latinos and I just didn't see as many going to college. I didn't see as many talking about master's degrees at all really.

Being in contact with Latinxs who are currently enrolled in or who aspire to be in graduate programs was an important way for Javier to begin to see graduate school as an option for him. Furthermore, this is how he constructed NSU's Latinx-enhancing identity. Although members constructed this indicator based on their institutionalized ways of knowing, student participants constructed NSU's current identity based on their experiences with the campus culture, or one in which Latinxs are the critical mass.

Employment

Of the 10 participants who constructed an ideal Latinx-serving identity based on post-graduation employment, few were able to articulate what it looked like in practice. Dr. Audrey Newman (White assistant professor) was an exception, as she talked specifically about the success of NSU's Latinx, Spanish-speaking alumni. "My students are amazing, they're all doing PR for *Univision* and *Telemundo* and then our broadcasting students are becoming anchors, and you know, just doing all sorts of amazing things. . . . So we have an amazing reputation." When Dr. Newman was asked what it means to be Hispanic-serving, she stressed the importance of HSIs

offering degrees that are relevant to the Latinx community, such as NSU's Spanish language journalism minor, and being intentional in their efforts to offer students the skills they need to be successful in a growing Spanish language job market. She saw these as distinct signs of NSU's Latinx-enhancing identity, as indicated by her statement, "I don't think anyone else does what we do."

Community Engagement

Of the 14 participants who talked about community engagement as an indicator of a Latinx-serving identity, some felt this was a central, distinct, and enduring aspect of NSU's identity. Participants, however, talked about community engagement from a Latinx-blind perspective, meaning they did not specifically reference the fact that the surrounding community is over 40% Latinx. Dr. Desi Reyes (Latino administrator) stated,

> We're very committed in creating a partnership within the larger community—with the constituents that we serve. For example, in my case, it would be school districts or community colleges or community groups, and trying to sort of develop a partnership between these various constituencies in a way to sort of better prepare the people that were graduating to service the larger community.

Yet Dr. Reyes went on to stress that NSU's overall commitment to the Latinx community is limited.

Of those participants who referenced the Latinx population when discussing community engagement as part of NSU's Latinx-servig identity, many were connected to the HSI grant activities at NSU, with funding being used to develop community-based programs focused on health disparities and childhood obesity. At the time of data collection, NSU had a program that focused on obesity reduction by way of breastfeeding. Dr. Carol Foster (White associate professor) said, "The idea was to get those individuals who are bilingual back out into their communities as certified lactation educators along with their undergrad degree in nutrition." Dr. Foster stressed the ways in which NSU's identity for serving Latinxs in the community was distinct in that they specifically set out to serve a largely Spanish-speaking community, which closely aligns with a Latinx-enhancing identity.

Positive Campus Climate

Although eight participants suggested that enacting a positive campus climate is an indicator of a Latinx-serving identity, student participants in particular constructed this as a distinct Latinx-enhancing identity. In particular, they pulled cues from the culture about deeply embedded assumptions and values held by NSU. Jessica Consuelos (Latina student) said,

> Well I only have a month in here and I feel like I'm at home. I really like [NSU] because they have like many organizations and many programs for Latino community. So even if I have a month in here I still, I don't know, I feel like I know many people already and many Latino people that have made me feel welcome.

Jessica, an international student from South America, raved about the sense of belonging she felt at NSU and compared it to her friend's experience at another non-HSI similar to NSU. Student participants, however, lacked the critical lens from which to analyze these types of indicators at a deeper level. For example, they did not think critically about allocation of funds, space, and other resources to Latinx students in comparison to others on campus.

Faculty and staff were more critical of the climate at NSU, suggesting that they had a long way to go in order to be Latinx-serving. Marlon Ross (White administrator) told a story of complaints he received from parents about the recent commencement ceremony being too focused on Latinx culture:

> The complaints that made it to me, either through the president's office or directly to me, were so coarse in their complaint about, "You make it sound like Latinos are the only ones doing things here and you make it sound like their struggles are more than anybody else's struggle."

While inviting prominent Latinx leaders and musicians to participate in graduation activities is a unique way that NSU embeds its commitment to serving Latinxs in the culture, Marlon argued that in order for NSU to have a Latinx-serving identity, it would have to find ways to eliminate the perception that the needs of Latinxs are being prioritized over other groups.

Support Programs

Participants who suggested support programs are ideal indicators of a Latinx-serving identity further articulated how NSU is committed in this way. Constance Berrera (Latina, program director) argued that EOP, which has been on NSU's campus for over four decades, was intertwined with NSU's Latinx-enhancing identity. She gave numerous examples of the ways EOP has been effective in serving all students at NSU, not just Latinx students. She said,

> And so I keep using EOP as an example because that's the best understanding I have of an organization that is really trying to serve the most—the neediest students, and to be honest, the neediest students are our Latino students, are our Black students.

Some students, however, were critical of the extent to which the support programs at NSU are reflective of a Latinx-serving identity, with Gloria

Giraldo (Latina student) suggesting that NSU prioritizes other groups over Latinx students:

> I honestly don't think they put a focus on [being an HSI]. Like they do events and stuff, I know they do—okay for example they are opening up this like new Gay and Lesbian Center, I think next week, and they have been promoting that for a long time. I think they focus in on a lot of ethnicities other than Hispanics, that's how I feel. Because like whenever the Chicano department does something, I don't really see like a lot of advertisement and stuff.

Other Latinx students had the same concerns, suggesting that in order to have a Latinx-serving identity, the institution should do a better job of embedding Latinx-centric events, such as *El Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead, a Mexican celebration), into the culture.

Discussion

With the increase in the number of postsecondary institutions that are eligible to be designated as HSIs, scholars continue to grapple with the question about what it means to be Latinx-serving. In asking members at one four-year HSI to describe the ideal indicators of an HSI organizational identity, they largely defined what it means to serve Latinx students along legitimized norms (e.g., graduation rates). At the same time, when asked to describe "who we are as an organization," they constructed a Latinx-enhancing identity through various reflections on an embedded culture for serving Latinx students. In doing this, they showed that an HSI organizational identity is socially constructed through both institutional and cultural perspectives.

From an institutional perspective, participants expressed that having a Latinx-serving identity should be based on legitimized outcomes, including graduation rates, enrollment in advanced degree programs, and employment. These legitimized outcomes, however, are not unique for HSIs. As suggested by institutional theory, HSIs are comparing themselves to other organizations in the field (through mimetic pressures) (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In a highly formalized field, organizations also gain legitimacy by adhering to policies and procedures that are enforced by government, public opinion, law, courts, and external criteria (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). As such, HSIs are defining their Latinx-serving identity by turning to the field for guidance, with little regard for the fact that these outcomes are not unique to HSIs. Furthermore, predominantly White institutions have normalized these outcomes while racialized institutions are forced to emulate them.

The problem with using legitimized measures to construct a Latinx-serving identity is that these indicators are often determined by variables that students enter institutions with and are often beyond the control of the institution. For example, HSIs are more likely to enroll low-income

students (de los Santos & Cuamea, 2010; Malcom-Piqueux & Lee, 2011), underprepared students (de los Santos & Cuamea, 2010), and students with less access to academic, financial, cultural, and social capital (Núñez & Bowers, 2011). Furthermore, HSIs are typically less selective (Malcom-Piqueux & Lee, 2011) and under-resourced (de los Santos & Cuamea, 2010; Hurtado & Ruiz Alvarado, 2015), which means they may struggle to meet traditionally accepted measures of success since selectivity and institutional expenditures are predictors of outcomes for Latinx students at HSIs (Núñez & Elizondo, 2012). Since nearly 50% of HSIs are two-year institutions (*Excelencia* in Education, 2016b), using traditional, legitimized outcomes to determine a Latinx-serving identity is also problematic because they are contrary to the multiple missions of community colleges (Dowd, 2003).

Using traditional measures to determine a Latinx-serving identity is further complicated by the stratified nature of the postsecondary educational system. In looking to the field, six-year graduation rates for all postsecondary institutions (not just HSIs) for Latinx students was 51% for the 2005 cohort, while it was much lower for open access institutions (31%) and much higher for the most selective institutions (85.9%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). These numbers also do not account for transfer rates from community colleges, with Latinx students entering community colleges at higher rates than other racial groups (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2011).

From a cultural perspective, identity is constructed based on deeply held perceptions about the organization's core values and beliefs. Through this lens, participants described "who we are" based on indicators of a culture that effectively serves Latinxs. This included opportunities to engage with the Latinx community, a campus climate that is positive for Latinx students, and the establishment of support programs for Latinx students. Organizational members at NSU constructed their Latinx-serving identity based on cultural cues, or tacit understandings of the values and beliefs that lie deep within the structures of the organization (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Furthermore, members defined "who we are" based on both internal and external definitions of self, with culture being a context for members to make sense of internal organizational practices, artifacts, and legacies (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006).

Instead of constructing a Latinx-serving identity based solely on measures that are correlated with individual outcomes (i.e., graduation, enrollment in graduate school, employment), using a cultural lens places the onus on the institution to deeply examine its structures and historical legacy for serving racialized populations. In this sense, having faculty and staff who connect with students via language, provide valuable support through cultural connections, and advocate on behalf of students is important. Providing culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy at HSIs is also important for students who have been historically excluded in textbooks, assignments, or classroom discussions (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). Furthermore,

administrators must be willing to engage institutional members in deep conversations about how the mission, values, and priorities connect to the culture, curriculum, and practices of the institution (Malcom, Bensimon, & Davila, 2010). While providing a culture that is intended to produce equitable outcomes for Latinx students is supported by decades of research (see Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012), some argue that the culture at HSIs provides a unique way of fulfilling this role.

Implications for Research and Policy

This study makes a timely contribution to the research on postsecondary institutions. Entering the next 100 years of education research, there must be a concerted effort to understand the unique ways that racialized students experience higher education and more importantly, the role of institutions in ensuring their success. While higher education scholars have developed an extensive body of research grounded within predominantly White institutions, this research turns attention to racialized institutions or those defined by the racial/ethnic composition of their students. As HSIs increase in number and significance, there is a growing need to understand how they come to serve historically marginalized groups.

Drawing from the current research on HSIs and the theoretical assumptions of institutionalism and organizational culture, this study was guided by the notion that having a Latinx-serving identity is based on both outcomes and culture. While researchers have extensively used institutional theory (e.g., Bastedo & Bowman, 2010; Birnbaum, 1983; Gonzales, 2013; Morphew & Huisman, 2002) and theories of organizational culture (e.g., Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tierney, 1988) to study institutions of higher education, few have used them to understand the construction of an organizational identity. This study shows how both theories can be used to understand the construction of an organizational identity for serving racialized students. With higher education institutions susceptible to the rapid changes in the demographics of the United States, organizational identity change is inevitable. As such, scholars must be able to understand the nature of a *transitional identity*, or one in which members make sense of an interim identity about who they are becoming (Clark, Gioia, Ketchen, & Thomas, 2010). Here I argue that this type of transitional identity must be studied through multiple theoretical lenses.

The typology presented can also be used to classify HSIs in order to make better comparisons in research. Like Núñez et al. (2016), I argue that research needs to consider the heterogeneity of HSIs in order to avoid reifying a superficial, reductive identity based strictly on institutionalized ways of knowing (Garcia, 2016). The typology presented in this study expands Núñez and colleagues' work, suggesting that HSIs be further distinguished based on the way organizational members construct their identities

along institutional and cultural perspectives. This has numerous implications for research. To begin, the theoretical assumptions made in this study are based on one case; subsequent studies should continue to test the theoretical notions laid out by focusing on other HSIs, particularly those that have different institutional characteristics (e.g., two-year, private, small). A similar study looking at Latinx-serving community colleges, for example, would complicate the ways in which members describe desirable outcomes for students simply because community colleges have different missions and purposes than baccalaureate institutions (Dowd, 2003). Future research must also look at the institutional structures available and necessary for producing the desirable outcomes and cultural environments described by participants in this study. Researchers may also use the typology developed by Núñez et al. in conjunction with the typology presented in this study to determine differences in identity construction based on cluster. For example, Small Communities Four-Year HSIs may be more focused on producing legitimized outcomes while Rural Dispersed Community College HSIs may be better equipped to develop a cultural environment conducive to Latinx student success.

The policy implications are also extensive. As institutions that are defined and legitimized by the federal government, this type of research must be considered at the federal level as decisions are made about HSIs. Federal agencies such as the Department of Education and the National Science Foundation that provide funding to HSIs should incorporate the findings from this study into their matrices for determining which institutions receive funding and how their success is measured. In thinking about what it means to be Latinx-serving, federal agencies must recognize that some HSIs are better at producing legitimized outcomes while others excel when it comes to providing a culture that enhances the postsecondary experience of Latinx students. As participants in this study suggested, an identity for serving Latinx students should incorporate both outcomes and cultural indicators and so should the measures of evaluation and assessment used by the federal government.

At the institutional level, this research also has important implications, especially for the 310 postsecondary institutions known as emerging HSIs that enroll between 15% and 24% Latinx students (*Excelencia* in Education, 2016a). These institutions will complicate what it means to be Latinx-serving, particularly as the number of highly selective research universities recognized as emerging HSIs increases. These institutions are likely to produce a high number of legitimized outcomes for Latinxs simply because they are more selective in whom they admit and therefore have a higher six-year graduation rate than less selective institutions (Kena et al., 2015). The challenge, however, will be for these institutions to also enact a culture for serving and supporting Latinx students. Again, some may be better at this than others. As institutions begin to consider what it means to serve an

increasingly high number of Latinx students, they must understand a Latinx-serving identity is complex and multifaceted, drawing on findings from this and related research to guide their progression toward HSI status.

Conclusions

As the youngest and fastest growing population in the United States, Latinxs are entering postsecondary institutions at substantial rates, driving the upsurge in the number of HSIs. Empirical studies focused on better understanding HSIs are essential as these institutions are critical to the access, success, and overall social mobility of Latinxs (Flores & Park, 2013; Gasman, 2008; Malcom-Piqueux & Lee, 2011). Furthermore, the growth of HSIs contributes to the diversity that makes the U.S. higher education system unique. Using various organizational theories, this study provides a typology that helps researchers better understand the multifaceted nature of an HSI identity. The findings are critical as they suggest that an organizational identity for serving racialized populations should incorporate legitimized and cultural ways of knowing.

Notes

[1]I use the term *Latinx* as a gender-inclusive term for people who self-identify as originating from Latin America, Mexico, the Caribbean, or South America; I use the term *Hispanic* in reference to the federal designation of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs).
[2]I use the term *eligible HSIs* to indicate that while these institutions are eligible for federal designation and funding as HSIs, they may not have pursued either; Santiago, Taylor, and Calderón Galdeano (2016) note that approximately half of those eligible have received funding.

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