An *Acción* Approach to Affirmative Action:
Hispanic-Serving Institutions as Spaces for Fostering Epistemic Justice

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Abstract

In this article, readers are asked to suspend conventional notions of affirmative action as a policy that ensures equitable admissions practices to the nation's most elite post secondary institutions, and instead to consider how affirmative action might be understood as a way to challenge the relations of power that govern the legitimation of knowledge and knowers within academia. Specifically, I present a model where Hispanic-Serving Institutions employ funds of knowledge work in order to foster epistemic justice: spaces where Latina and Latino students and the broader communities from which they come are positioned as thinkers, knowers, problem-solvers, and theorists in their own right.

Introduction

Perhaps more than ever before, the attainment of a post-secondary education is essential to socio-economic security and general quality of life. However, researchers have shown that all college degrees are not viewed as equal. Specifically, students who attend elite, well-resourced institutions are likely to experience "greater access to graduate and professional schools…substantial labor market advantages, including… and access to professional and managerial elite jobs, as well as careers that bring personal and social empowerment" (Carneval & Strohl, 2013). For these reasons, Civil Rights and equity advocates have fought to ensure that underrepresented students of color have equal access to these elite institutions. A key tool in this advocacy work has been Affirmative Action, which originated as part of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. Specifically, Civil Rights attorneys, legal and social science scholars as well as public activists, argue that colleges and universities have a legal responsibility to ensure equity in the college selection process, just as employers have the responsibility to ensure equity during the hiring process. Smartly, advocates argue that if colleges and universities fail to secure equity in the admissions process, then they fail to provide the most robust and challenging teaching and learning dynamic, overall (Chang, Denson, Saénz, & Misa, 2006; Garces & Jayakumar, 2014; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Smith, 2009).

Clearly, the fight to ensure that underrepresented students have equal access to the kind of elite institutions described above is imperative, but in this paper, I ask readers to suspend this conventional application of affirmative action, and to consider alternative approaches to affirmative action. Specifically, the goal of this paper is to argue that Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) — institutions whose student enrollment is at least 25 percent Hispanic[10] —have the opportunity to employ affirmative action in ways that explicitly challenge the construction, recognition, and dissemination of knowledge within U.S. higher education. I argue that given the critical mass of Latinos that are already enrolled in HSIs, these institutions have surpassed what I consider to be an insufficient focus on access/admission and are onto the possible achievement of epistemic justice (Frank, 2013). Defined, epistemic justice is a state where individuals, from all backgrounds, but especially marginalized backgrounds, have the opportunity to leave impressions on old and new knowledge, and especially to articulate knowledges that have long been silenced. To this end, I take Frank's argument concerning epistemic justice and frame it as the ultimate form of affirmative action, and one that Hispanic-Serving Institutions are well

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10. Typically, I use the identifiers "Latina," "Latino," or "Latin@" to refer to the panethnic group of people that the government generally refers to as Hispanic. When appropriate, I might reference the specific ethnic group (e.g., Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican). I only use the identifier Hispanic when using legal/governmental references or technical definitions.

positioned to implement.[11] In this way, I also intentionally position HSIs as places from which predominantly White institutions can — and should — learn.

To illustrate my argument, I present a model (see page 9) informed by a "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) perspective, which addresses practice and policy at three key levels: HSI administration/ formal leadership, student service professionals, and the professoriate. A theory and a methodology, funds of knowledge assumes that all individuals and communities hold and produce knowledge that is relevant and valuable, although mainstream institutions, including educational institutions, may not always recognize such knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Rios-Aguilar, Marquez Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). Thus, taken together, I argue that HSIs, if informed by funds of knowledge theory and method, are poised to foster epistemic justice — spaces where Latina and Latino students and the broader communities from which they come are positioned as thinkers, knowers, problem-solvers, and theorists in their own right. To set up the paper, I present a brief history of HSIs and then a deeper discussion of both funds of knowledge and epistemic justice.

Literature Review: Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Defined, HSIs are degree-granting, non-profit postsecondary institutions whose undergraduate student enrollment is comprised of at least 25 percent or more Hispanic students. Unlike the intentionality behind the development of Tribal Colleges and Universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities, there was no purposeful development of HSIs. Instead, HSIs evolved as sizeable numbers of Latinas and Latinos enrolled in affordable two and four-year institutions close to home, a pattern uncovered in the late 1980s, which led advocates within the Latino community to form the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). The key goals for HACU was to highlight how just a few institutions were providing access and opportunity to the Latino community. Eventually, due to HACU's efforts, Hispanic-Serving Institutions were named under Title III in the *1992 Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act*. However, today, HSI matters fall under *Title V* of the *HEA* (Calderón Galdeano, Flores, & Moder 2012).

In order to officially become designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, a college or university must submit an application that documents eligibility and commitment to serve Latino students to the U.S. Department of Education. Once an institution earns the designation, it becomes eligible for "special purpose" funding via *Title V*. This funding is intended to assist Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the development of programming and infrastructure to serve their student populations, which tend to not only be Latino, but also first-generation, working class, and "non-traditional" in terms of age, working, and familial responsibilities (Nuñez & Elizondo, 2012). It is important to note that although HSIs are eligible for such set-aside funding, historically, they receive and spend substantially fewer resources per student when compared to similar institutions (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012).

Today, there are 409 HSIs located across the United States and Puerto Rico, a number that has exponentially increased in recent years, and that will only continue to grow in the near future (*Excelencia,* 2014). Together, these 409 HSIs enroll almost 56 percent of the total Latino college-going population (*Excelencia*, 2014). A recent degree-of-origin analysis indicated that HSIs matriculate the majority of Hispanics who hold an associate and baccalaureate degree, and HSIs also produce about 25 percent of doctorates held by Hispanics (Santiago & Soliz, 2012). Clearly, HSIs have been and will continue to be key to the educational advancement of Latinos and Latinas (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Laden, 2004).

It is important to note that despite the success that HSIs have had in terms of enrolling and graduating substantial numbers of Latinos, some scholars have been frustrated to find that HSIs do not necessarily embrace or extoll a Hispanic-Serving identity (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008; Greene & Oesterreich, 2012; Torres & Zerquera, 2012). To this end, Contreras, Malcom, and Bensimon (2008) agued that although there is a

11. It should be made clear that my work is not intended as an argument *against* affirmative action; instead, it should be understood as another way to advance equity and diversity, particularly in relation to the construction of knowledge and intellectual work. In short, I believe that to stake the struggle for diversity on so few institutions narrows the fight in unnecessary ways. Additionally, conventional approaches to affirmative action suggest that only a small pocket of institutions can provide a quality education while ignoring the contributions that Minority-Serving Institutions, like HSIs, have made for many years now.

technical, enrollment based definition of HSIs, it is unclear as to what it means educationally, experientially, and culturally to enact a Hispanic-*Serving* mission (also see Cole, 2011; Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez, & Plum, 2004; Greene & Osterreich, 2012; Hubbard & Stage, 2009; Murphy, Araiza, Cardenas, & Garza, 2013; Torres & Zerquera, 2012).

Alternatively, other scholars like Murakami-Ramalho, Núñez, and Cuero (2010) and Cuellar (2014) provide evidence that HSI faculty members and staff are especially committed to the advancement of undeserved populations, including Latinas and Latinos (also see Ek, Cerecer, Alanís, & Rodríguez, 2010; Gonzales, 2014). To this point, Hurtado and Ruiz (2012) argue that, given their young age, HSIs have an incredible opportunity to go beyond the requisite enrollment criteria and to define what it means to be "Hispanic-Serving" (p. 5). The model that I propose is built on the premise of this incredible opportunity, and the theoretical foundations for this model are described next.

Theoretical Foundations: Funds of Knowledge and Epistemic Justice

This work is founded on and advances the assumption that there are multiple ways of knowing, and that ways of knowing are inevitably tied to one's location in broader social and structural systems, to one's familial and communal ties, and experiences that stem from those ties. Here, I summarize the theoretical foundations that inform the model, presented below.

Funds of Knowledge

Molls, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez (1992) introduced funds of knowledge based on their ethnography of Mexican communities in the Southwestern part of the U.S. There were two major goals for the Moll et al., project. First, the researchers aimed to document the knowledge that exists in Mexican communities as a result of their cultural, labor, and im/migration histories. Second, the researchers aimed to inform education policy and practice by implementing the documented funds of knowledge inside classrooms and in the school community, at large. By developing a curriculum and context steeped in the histories, traditions, and worldviews of their home communities, Moll et al., argued that Mexican youth would find schooling to be a more relevant and validating experience. Taken together, funds of knowledge work can inform education practice and policy in many ways and to different degrees. For example, teachers might include communal and culturally relevant cooking or labor-based knowledge into science and/or civic lessons. Furthermore, schools and communities might nurture a reciprocal teaching and learning relationship that is deployed to inform reforms with a potential impact on either party.

Given its genesis, most funds of knowledge work has been conducted and implemented in the context of K-12 school-community relationships. However, higher education researchers have recently argued that the funds of knowledge approach (and similar perspectives) can help post-secondary institutions build more inclusive teaching and learning experiences for underrepresented and underserved communities (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). For example, Yosso (2006), who was influenced by Moll et al. (1992), funds of knowledge scholarship and critical race theory built a model entitled "community cultural wealth." Yosso highlighted how Chicano families and communities instill their youth with numerous forms of capital, including cultural, familial, aspirational, resistant, navigational, and linguistic capital. Additionally and importantly, Yosso showed how students usefully deployed these forms of capital throughout their student experience. Moving one step further, Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll (2011) argued that the cultural capital and knowledges that are honed within Latino (and other underrepresented) communities should be understood in relation to key higher education outcomes. In other words, Rios-Aguilar et al., not only urge higher education professionals to acknowledge the capital that underrepresented communities bring to post-secondary education, but to position these forms of capital as indicators of success. In sum, funds of knowledge work compels one to uncover, acknowledge, and then apply culturally relevant knowledge, capital, and histories to education policy and practice, and for these reasons, it is a viable theory and method that can be used to defeat epistemic injustice and foster epistemic justice (Frank, 2013).

Epistemic Justice

Frank (2013) argued that epistemic diversity — a concept quite similar to funds of knowledge — falls short in terms of ensuring equity and legitimacy in the knowledge production processes within post-secondary education (e.g., researching, teaching, publishing). Frank defined epistemic diversity with the following two ideas: "(1) there are multiple ways of approaching a problem," especially in terms of producing knowledge, and (2) "there are multiple epistemologies [which suggests that] there is no way of adjudicating between them" (p. 363). It is evident that epistemic diversity and funds of knowledge share some key parallels (e.g., recognition that there are numerous ways of seeing the world, developing knowledge, solving problems). Thus, initially, it may seem odd to adopt Frank's argument as a complement to the funds of knowledge premise described above. However, Frank was legitimately concerned that epistemic diversity risks a relativistic view of knowledge, which allows major structural barriers and unequal relations of power to escape firm critique or dissolution.

Therefore, Frank focuses on the role that researchers and education researchers, especially, can have in fostering space for underrepresented, long-marginalized peoples to create and disseminate knowledge, and to ensure that the truths that they have to tell are allowed to be spoken/written/expressed. Thus, when Frank writes about the defeat of epistemic injustice and the fostering of epistemic justice, he is arguing for more inclusive epistemological practices (e.g., how research is conducted and shared) where multiple ways of knowing, seeing the world, solving problems, and articulating truths are embraced. Frank's central rationale is that securing epistemic justice is absolutely critical to developing a fuller, more robust, more precise view of the world. Frank described how, in a state of epistemic injustice:

> …those with power often determine what perspectives are important and worth listening to [which means that many] in our social world go unheard [leaving] our collective epistemic resources…less robust than they otherwise would be….Those without power are silenced [leading] to an incomplete and inaccurate vision of the social world…. The truth of our social world will elude us until we learn what it means to hear across the social spectrum (p. 365).

Frank argued that post-secondary institutions and education researchers have a special obligation to advance epistemic justice. In the next sections, I depict how HSIs' leaders, student service professionals, and faculty members can, indeed, employ funds of knowledge work in order to foster epistemic justice [See figure on page 9].

An Acción Approach to Affirmative Actions:
Hispanic-Serving Institutions as Spaces for Fostering Epistemic Justice

This model, presented below, is intended as a radical approach to affirmative action. Rather than focus on admissions processes alone or what Witham and Bensimon (2012) call "functional fixes," (p. 1), which allow post-secondary institutions to largely maintain the status quo, this model illustrates how HSI leadership, student service professionals, and faculty can employ "funds of knowledge" theory and method and foster epistemic justice. The primary or most influential level of the model is the Latino community in which the HSI is situated. The Latino community is positioned as holding many epistemic riches and important knowledges that can and should inform the daily work, practices, and policies within HSIs in order to present as more relevant and empowering spaces to Latino and Latina students. The HSI, itself, is positioned as a learning organization that employs funds of knowledge theory and method at three distinct levels: (1) positional leaders/administration; (2) student service professionals; and (3) the professoriate.

Model 1. Hispanic-Serving Institutions as Spaces for Fostering Epistemic Justice

HSI Leadership: Committing to a Culture of Inquiry via Funds of Knowledge

To foster epistemic justice via a funds of knowledge approach will require a fundamental shift about how one views the responsibility of higher education providers, especially in relation to undeserved and underrepresented communities, like Latino communities. Specifically, HSI leaders must begin from the perspective that U.S. higher education in its majoritarian form and function does not present itself as a culturally relevant or friendly place for underrepresented communities, including Latinos (Rendón, 1994, 2002). With this in mind, the start point for leaders must be a willingness to ask themselves and others what it means to carry a Hispanic-Serving designation, and to hold themselves, their programs, and staff responsible for fulfilling what should be a distinctive mission.

Upon reflection of such questions, HSI leaders must be willing to act as institutional agents: individuals who not only possess, but who are willing to deploy key resources in order to advance groups that have historically been marginalized or underserved in higher education (also see Bensimon, Dowd, Chase, Sawatzky, Shieh, Rall, & Jones, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). One of the first measures that HSI leaders could implement is a culture of inquiry. This culture of inquiry should stress the continual professional development and growth of HSI administrators, staff, and faculty, organizational learning, as a whole, and it should be anchored by funds of knowledge thinking. One of the easiest ways to energize a culture of inquiry is to form and support the development of reading groups or workshops where HSI faculty, administrators, and staff read literature on Latino and Latina students. Because conventional theories of student development are based on majoritarian populations (White, middle-class males), many higher education professionals and much of higher education programming and tradition prescribes activities and engagement that do not reflect the needs or lives of Latinos (e.g., on-campus living, minimal and preferably on-campus employment, integration). Yet, the research on Latino and Latina college students reveals a fairly different portrait of behaviors and orientations. For example, according to Torres and Zerquera (2012), Hurtado and Ponjuan (2005), and Yosso (2006), Latin@ students draw heavily on family connectedness as a source of support and can do quite well while living at home. Moreover, while there is great diversity in the socio-economic backgrounds of the Latino population, most work by necessity, and many take pride in the work ethic instilled by their families (Gonzales, 2012). Additionally, researchers have found that significant portions of the Latino community are hesitant to acquire student debt in order to finance their studies (Cejda et al., 2008; Cunningham & Brown, 2008). Finally, Espino (2014) recently demonstrated how Mexican American students deployed community cultural wealth and capital in order to persevere through their graduate programs. All of these insights are incredibly enlightening, and could help professionals within HSIs to reshape their work.

However, a funds of knowledge approach requires that institutional agents go beyond learning from literature, and pay close attention to the assets and knowledge within the Latino community. For example, HSI leaders should make concerted efforts to recruit, hire, and retain faculty, administrators and staff of color, particularly from Latino backgrounds. Although it is not fair to assume that all Latinos want to serve as role

models to Latino students or even to give them this charge (Espino, 2014), students benefit from their presence on campus as they will see themselves in the professionals who teach, administer, and serve on campus. There are a few exemplary cases where HSIs are making such strategic hiring investments, which might be of interest to other HSI leaders. For example Murakami-Ramalho, Núñez, & Cuero (2010) documented the critical mass of Latina and Latino faculty that have been recruited at the University of Texas San Antonio (see Gonzales, 2015 for a description of faculty demographics at HSIs).

In seeking to engender a culture of inquiry that is committed to equity and inclusiveness, Bensimon and Bishop (2012) offer HSI leaders another simple but powerful starting point: ask different kinds of questions, seek different kinds of data, and look at data in very intentional ways. For example, rather than ask "why Latino students lag behind in graduation rates," which is true even within HSI settings (Contreras et al., 2008; Murphy, 2013), a better question is "how might we, as institution, better serve Latinas and Latinos in order to advance them towards graduation?" Continuing with this example, and drawing from funds of knowledge principles, if institutional researchers discover that graduation rates are lower among students who work off-campus, HSI leaders must act as institutional agents and consider what kind of innovative services or programming might better serve this student demographic. Rather than promote the idea that "students shouldn't work so much," as college students are often advised, HSI leaders could develop a campaign that highlights the resilience and commitment of their students, and reach out to city and county officials to develop citywide campaigns that ask local employers to support their working college students through flexible scheduling or helpful benefits. Employers could be invited as signatories to such commitments. Even symbolic activities like these demonstrate that HSI leaders are investing time and energy to serve their students and validate their lives. Most importantly, such efforts avoid deficit assumptions about students who might have to prioritize or balance work with school, as researchers have shown that many Latino students have no choice, given the current parameters for student aid, but to work while in college (Cejda, Casparis, Rhodes, Seal-Nyman, 2008).

In keeping with the graduation rates scenario, HSIs should seek and leverage knowledge held among the immediate community. Community organizations, including faith-based entities and social service agencies, hold an extraordinary amount of knowledge about local community conditions, and formal and informal leaders within the community. Community based organizations as well as leaders could be asked to serve as "cultural brokers" that further the partnerships with HSIs, businesses, and local government. For example, Cooper (2014) recently described how various organizations and actors served as "cultural brokers" that helped immigrant students access higher education and form a college-going identity.

Finally, HSI leaders must commit to disaggregating data according to identity markers that hold particular significance among that respective Latino community. Nuñez's (2014) recently published intersectionality framework can provide HSI leaders and institutional researchers with key insights about how to organize and disaggregate data in ways that are relevant to Latino populations. In this framework, Nuñez highlights the importance of immigrant status, linguistic background, and high school background in addition to other common identity markers (e.g., gender, race). By accounting for the intersection of multiple identities that seem to matter to student success, HSI leaders commit to holding themselves and their programs accountable.

Up until now, the suggestions for HSI leaders have circulated around the need to challenge conventional views on the obligations that higher education has to local communities, asking critical questions, and establishing rapport with the community/community organizations. However, to facilitate a funds of knowledge approach and move towards epistemic justice, HSI leaders must deploy resources that support intense institutional research inspired by funds of knowledge methods. Following the funds of knowledge work, institutional leaders could provide educational, physical, and fiscal resources so that faculty members, graduate students, student support services, as well as institutional researchers engage in community-based inquiry. The goal of such institutional research is simple, but powerful: build a teaching and learning relationship of reciprocity with the local community, and uncover the assets that exist within the community in order to thread such insights into the campus culture and curriculum. An institutional research team could collect narrative and oral histories from local community members in order to develop a special feature within the campus library. This team might document the labor skills within the local community, and promote homegrown businesses in campus activities. Additionally, as funds of knowledge scholars would advocate, this team could also provide support to a community, if needed.

For example, if a city is developing new housing, professors of anthropology or architecture could ensure that the community has a voice in the process. Through such community based, funds of knowledge research, HSIs would clearly position the local community as a source of knowledge and instruction, while also making available to that community the skills of higher education professionals. Gina Núñez (2014) recently wrote about the development and maintenance of an almost decade-old community based research project that HSI leaders can consult for further direction.

Student Services: Funds of Knowledge, Continual Learning for Practice

As noted earlier, student affairs professionals in the U.S. typically adhere rather closely to dominant ideas and idealizations of what it takes to be a successful student. These ideas were developed from research on White, majoritarian, male experiences (Astin, 1985; Tinto, 1993). However, in an HSI led by leaders who have committed to funds of knowledge and epistemic justice, student service professionals must be offered the opportunity to expand their academic and professional repertoire.

Thus, one step for student service professionals is to participate in the reading groups and praxis workshops suggested above. Key readings for student service professionals should include Rendón's validation theory (1994, 2002), which was developed when Rendón determined that the dominant theories of student development did not seem to make sense to the lives, experiences, or perspectives of many underrepresented students, including students of color, students from working class backgrounds, and/or first-generation college students. Accordingly, very much like funds of knowledge work, validation theory and research establishes an understanding of the history, needs, and strengths of underrepresented and underserved communities. Although Rendón (1994) suggests that any member of a university community can validate students, her work holds particular relevance for student service professionals, such as those individuals that administer clubs and organizations, orientation and advising sessions, leadership, professional, and career development; and/or related on-campus programming.

Student service professionals can also benefit from reading research on the college decision-making processes for Latinos. For example, Cejda et al. (2008) and Torres and Zerquera (2012) found that Latino and Latina students tend to use personal and familial contacts — instead of school counselors — to inform their college enrollment choices. Additionally, Latino students seem to consider proximity to home/family in their decision-making processes, and Núñez and Bowers (2011) noted that these factors even impact the choices of the most academically competitive students. Based on these readings, student affairs professionals have reason to develop programs where students identify key individuals from their personal and familial networks, who most inspired or influenced their college going process. Student services could invite these individuals to attend important (beyond orientation) events that provide insight into college life, time commitments, and critical deadlines. If agreeable to both the student and the individual, the individual could be kept apprised of the student's college progress and milestones through a variety of formats (e.g., email, letter, phone calls). Additionally, these influential individuals could receive early alerts about absenteeism or missed exams. These practices, which are typically referred to as "intrusive advising" (Faulconer, Geissler, Majewski, & Trifilio, 2014; Jones & Hansen, 2014), have repeatedly been found to have a positive impact on student retention and performance. Jones and Hansen (2014) as well as Faulconer et al., (2014) both provide examples of intrusive advising. Finally, Espino (2014) recently illuminated the many forms of cultural wealth that Mexican American PhD students leveraged throughout their doctoral studies; the insights in this study could inform graduate student advising and programming.

In addition to reading and applying the insights learned from published research, student service professionals must also implement the knowledge and insights gained from the funds of knowledge inspired institutional research described above. A very good example of how student service professionals might implement or draw from funds of knowledge research can be found in the work of Guajardo, Alvarez, Guajardo, Garcia, Guajardo, and Marquez (2014). In this paper, Guajardo et al. (2014) described a funds of knowledge research project developed largely by faculty and students, and then suggested that student service professionals could build off of the results in various ways. Film screenings, book clubs, and campus activities could be built

around discoveries made in funds of knowledge research. In order to deeply integrate funds of knowledge discoveries in this way, however, structures that enable university-wide collaboration and communication must be developed and supported. An office of community engagement or a modernized version of extension services might be the sort of structural arrangement that could offer necessary support.

If student service professionals find themselves in an HSI that is without the kind of resources suggested above, they can consider a number of exemplary programs already in operation, which reflect funds of knowledge ideals (even if they explicitly do not espouse them). Student service professionals can turn to advocacy agencies like *Excelencia* to identify such model programs or Martinez and Gonzales (2015) identified several programs housed at HSIs, which demonstrated culturally informed student programming. Using content analysis of programmatic websites and documents, Martinez and Gonzales highlighted ten programs that seek to understand and honor students and the larger communities from which they come. One of the programs that Martinez and Gonzales described is titled *Grow Your Own Teachers* (GYO). Housed at Northeastern Illinois University, GYO aims to "develop aspiring teachers from communities of color in order to support their educational goals…[and] is based in the assumption that these communities have much knowledge and ability to serve" (Schultz, Gillette, & Hill, 2011, p. 5). GYO program administrators explain that the program's efforts were informed by early studies into the lives of their participants. Based on the results of this inquiry, administrators realized that in order for them to have the best chance at success, the program would have to dedicate resources to create wide family supports, child care options, financial aid, and career/transition to teaching counseling.

Another example from the Martinez and Gonzales paper was the *Transitional Bilingual Learning Community,* established in 2002 at Harry S. Truman College in Chicago, Illinois. The stated goal of this learning community is to serve "students who, because of limited skills in English and limited financial resources, would otherwise not be attending college on a full-time basis" (TBLC, n.d., para 1). In this particular Hispanic community, the college sees promising students with much to contribute to learning and society, including their bilingual skills. To this end, the program offers extensive translation services along with bilingual learning environments for students as they make the early transition into college life. Student affairs administrators within HSIs might want to consider these two examples — as well as the other efforts documented by Martinez and Gonzales — to revise or complement current approaches to student outreach and retention.

The Professoriate: Acknowledging, Producing, and Disseminating Knowledge

Recall that Frank (2013) began from the assumption that the production and legitimation of knowledge within academia has historically been in a state of "epistemic injustice," where underserved and underrepresented populations have been kept out, and generally not given equal access to platforms where knowledge is advanced (e.g., the canon, the curriculum, publication). Indeed, many scholars, particularly those who utilize a critical lens in their work, have long described how academia, the teaching and learning process, and related knowledge production processes have historically centered White, Western, male, scientistic/positivistic ways of knowing (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Gonzales & Núñez, 2014; Gutierrez y Muhs, Flores Niehmann, González, & Harris, 2012; Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012; Smith, 1987; Stanley, 2007).

With this in mind, it seems that faculty members have the most experience with the epistemic injustice that Frank described, as well as the most opportunity to foster space of epistemic justice. The culture of inquiry, anchored in funds of knowledge, and the actual funds of knowledge institutional research described above provide faculty members with a foundation for epistemic justice work. Based on the roles and responsibilities of faculty, I argue that faculty have at least three avenues to carry out such efforts; these avenues include (1) the academic curriculum/teaching and learning context; (2) their own research and publication practices; and (3) the development of students into scholars.

First, in terms of (re)shaping academic curriculum and experiences based on funds of knowledge, one simple step is to incorporate scholarship produced by Latinas and Latinos or concerning Latino communities (e.g., books, articles, performances) into their course work. Although this might seem to be a minor adjustment, Cole's (2011) analysis of university course catalogs revealed that among Historically Black Colleges and

Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions, HSIs offered the fewest number of race/ethnic centered and culturally oriented courses. In other words, HBCUs and TCUs successfully threaded more racially, ethnically, and culturally relevant courses and elements into their undergraduate curriculum. The inclusion of scholarship by Latino scholars, and/or scholarship about Latino communities is something that faculty in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and applied fields can easily accommodate.

If faculty members are unsure where to begin with such work, there are several free and easy-to-access tools on the Internet (e.g., YouTube, CUNY Latinas in History Project), National Public Radio, The Public Broadcasting system, or the Pew Research Center. In fact, this is an area of potential investment for institutional leaders/agents. A position could be created for the sole purpose of building this academic catalogue, and helping faculty to identify relevant sources for their field/topic. On this note, it is important that HSI faculty members remain aware of the diversity within the Latino population, meaning that if an HSI has a predominant Afro-Latino student population, efforts should be made to include scholars/scholarship from this particular subgroup. One potential reference that could provide Latina students from various backgrounds a chance to see themselves in the curriculum is Jennifer De Leon's (2014) recent edited collection on Latina access and experience in higher education. However, the book is limited to women, and so it would be important for faculty to find additional sources featuring Latino males.

In terms of shaping the academic curriculum, and essentially changing the teaching and learning context, faculty can actually employ funds of knowledge practices by asking students to draw from their histories in relation to the course materials. For example, a science professor can ask students to describe if and how they/their family members have ever worked with certain materials/chemicals/processes. If a student described a grandmother who is a savvy gardener, a father with an expertise for building and carpentry, or a sister who works in design, the professor can make references to those activities in relation to the course material. Indeed, these are the very kinds of curricular innovations that Moll et al. (1992), prescribed for teachers in the initial funds of knowledge project. However, Alvarez and Martínez (2014) provide solid examples of how faculty can incorporate funds of knowledge work into the curriculum at a post-secondary level. Specifically, Alvarez and Martínez described a classroom experiment in which they invited the late Puerto Rican poet, Tato Laviera, into a composition class in their Texas-based HSI. Recounting the experience, Alvarez and Martínez wrote:

> It was a rare occasion in which the institution acknowledged and gave credit to students for the knowledge they possessed while still assisting in the further development of their education…. We were not certain what would come from the course but our selfish hopeswere that Laviera… could help students understand the tremendous importance of their work — and that of their families — to the well being of our nation. We believed that if students could come to an understanding of the importance of their stories, there would be no telling how far their new *conciencia* could take them (p. 208).

Alvarez and Martínez (2014) go on to describe how students were positioned as knowledge carriers and storytellers throughout this classroom experiment. Alvarez and Martínez's lesson could be replicated in many disciplines with special lecturers that possess content knowledge on the given topic. Professional development for faculty would probably be necessary, and is yet another way that leaders can act as institutional agents: by providing resources for faculty to learn about funds of knowledge work and how to implement such activities.

As alluded to earlier, faculty also have the opportunity to shape their own research around funds of knowledge ideals. The most obvious opportunity would be for faculty members, who have an interest, to become involved in the funds of knowledge institutional research being conducted at the institutional level. Professors can immerse themselves in the community to understand its riches, to build bridges and share knowledge across those bridges, and to inform institutional practices, such as student support services, the intentional data disaggregation, and overall programming described earlier. HSI faculty might want to consult Núñez's (2014) recent paper, where she outlined several benefits and best practices developed from her community-based scholarship. As a scholar at an HSI, Núñez has developed multi-layered community engaged research project that allows students to see the assets in their communities in radical new ways. In describing the impact of participating in community-engaged scholarship, one of Núñez's students said, "I have changed the way I think about the community. I used to take everything for granted and now I appreciate what I see" (Núñez, 2014, p.

94). The work of Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, and Moll (2011) provides additional guidance as to how faculty can develop funds of knowledge research projects in connection with the assessment of important student learning outcomes.

Following the conduct of scholarship, professors are expected to disseminate their work. In line with the praxis orientation of funds of knowledge work, HSI scholars should be prepared to diversify their dissemination strategy. Specifically, in addition to academic journal publications, funds of knowledge scholars typically share their work via radio broadcasts, policy and practice briefs, evaluative or technical reports prepared for community partners, or short online videos, like the one created by Guajardo et al., (2014). However, if HSI faculty members partake in the funds of knowledge approach and apply it in their teaching, research, and dissemination practices, it is critical that faculty colleagues involved in the tenure and promotion process as well as key administrative leaders (e.g., chairs, provosts) support them. Tenure and promotion committees should consider reading studies by Bernal and Villalpando (2002), Gonzales and Núñez (2014), and Stanley (2007) to understand how bias insidiously operates in the evaluation of scholars and scholarship — a bias that almost inevitably marginalizes action research, local and cultural knowledge and language, and critical scholarship, overall. An additional practical resource for tailoring evaluation systems to recognize community-based, arts, and other "non-traditional" scholarly work is the *Imagining America* website. Clearly, faculty members engaged in funds of knowledge work, who aim to share it widely as to highlight local forms of knowledge and position Latino communities and students as knowers, thinkers, and problem solvers cannot foster epistemic justice alone; institutions must ensure that space as well. Therefore, tenure and promotion guidelines, and other evaluative schema, should be devised so as to reflect the goal of epistemic justice.

Faculty members have many platforms and tools with which they can engender epistemic justice. They can provide space in their curriculum, they can explicitly employ funds of knowledge research themselves, and finally, they can work to develop the scholarly potential in students. Fostering epistemic justice mandates not only that culturally relevant knowledge are acknowledged and threaded into the teaching and learning dynamic, which is largely achieved via funds of knowledge, but it is also about ensuring that others are given the tools to further create knowledge and articulate knowledge within academia as well. In this way, HSI faculty members should consider how they can best prepare and support their Latino students to carry out scholarly work. Such preparation must not only focus on the mechanics of research, but also on the politics of publication. Workshops for graduate students, then, might include readings like Stanley's (2007) essay on the publication process as well as general frank conversations about coping with manuscript rejections or how to identify suitable outlets for various types of work. Such explicit preparation for academia is rare, but underrepresented scholars suggest that this is the very kind of information that they believe future faculty can benefit from as described by Montgomery, Johnson, and Dodson (2014).

Before closing, it is important to acknowledge that not all faculty members, or all course work, or even an entire course must be steeped in funds of knowledge work, Latino scholars, or Latino communities; indeed, some individuals will not see value in this goal (Murphy, Araiza, Cardenas, & Garza, 2013). However, faculty members can practice funds of knowledge principles to the degree that they are appropriate and comfortable. In other words, the assurance of space for those who commit to funds of knowledge work and the creation of knowledge in new, critical and different ways is far more important than a uniform application, overall.

Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that HSIs have the opportunity to offer a radically new application of affirmative action. Specifically, I argued that by deploying resources and intentionally committing to organizational learning and inquiry anchored in the funds of knowledge approach, HSIs have the opportunity to serve as spaces for epistemic justice. This model, of course, requires that formal as well as informal leaders act as critical, institutional agents in the ways that Bensimon and colleagues (2011) suggest, and it requires that student service professionals retool their professional repertoires with culturally-relevant practices and theories in the ways that Cuellar (2014) and Martinez and Gonzales (2015) describe. It also, of course, demands that faculty employ any or all of their platforms to honor and advance multiple ways of knowing and producing knowledge, so as to assist Latina and Latino students to see themselves and their communities as valid, valuable, and indeed legitimate knowers, as has been described in the work of Rios-Aguilar and colleagues (2011).

Working towards epistemic justice is, I believe, the ultimate form of affirmative action that colleges and universities can commit to as it advances equity beyond structural or numerical counts, and instead commits to equity in terms of the core purposes of higher education: teaching, learning, and the production of knowledge. Given the current position that HSIs hold in the field of higher education, they have the unique opportunity to demonstrate how colleges and universities can be spaces that serve towards democracy, justice and equity by honoring diverse epistemologies, knowledges, and assets in the production of knowledge.

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