



Racing to Serve or Race-ing for Money? Hispanic-serving Institutions and the Colorblind Allocation of Racialized Federal Funding

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Abstract

It is often presumed that minority-serving institutions (MSIs)—colleges and universities with the mission or capacity to serve underrepresented students—operate with a mission to alleviate broad inequalities by race. Yet the degree to which this remains true for Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), the fastest growing subset of MSIs, is contested and unexplored systematically. In this study the authors briefly detail the founding of HSI as a racialized status and consider how colleges and universities designated as HSIs today are serving Latinx students with racialized federal funding. The historical process and criteria by which HSI was established as a racialized designation, the authors argue, continues to shape their racial logics. Through a content analysis of the population of successful Title V “Developing Hispanic-serving Institution” grant abstracts to the U.S. Department of Education (2009–2016), the authors find great consistency in how HSIs conceptualize their Latinx student populations but substantial variation in how they seek to “serve” Latinx students. In the large majority of cases (85 percent), Latinx students are not centered in HSIs’ Title V programmatic efforts, which are instead organized to serve their entire student bodies. Because HSI status was conferred primarily by Latinx student enrollments, and not a mission to serve Latinx students, dominant colorblind White logics frequently persist at HSIs. Consequently, Latinx educational inequalities are rarely explicitly addressed. In their quests to secure funding as minority serving institutions, we find that HSIs often fail to center the Latinx students who permit their very eligibility.

Keywords

racialized institutions, minority-serving institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, higher education, Latinxs

Race is systematically performed, legislated, practiced, ignored, and erased in higher education in ways that can embed, embolden, or ameliorate racial inequalities. Colleges and universities act as institutional sites of racialization, continuously reshaping the contours of race and inequality on their campuses and in society at large (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Moore 2008; Ray 2017). Wittingly or not, the dominant racial logics of these institutions—the explicit or implicit modal conceptualizations of race and racism institutional leaders and actors abide by—inform the programs, initiatives, and everyday practices that can serve to redress racial disparities, or they can be ordered in ways

that perpetuate a more unequal racialized society (Moore 2008; Moore and Bell 2017). It is often

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presumed that minority-serving institutions (MSIs) of higher education are more likely to draw from racial logics that prioritize alleviating racial inequalities by centering the needs and experiences of otherwise underrepresented student groups. Yet the degree to which this presumption accurately reflects Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs)—the fastest growing subset of minority serving colleges and universities—is contested and has not been systematically explored (Contreras, Malcolm, and Bensimon 2008). Such explorations are critical given HSIs' potential reach. HSIs now make up 14 percent of all colleges and universities across the country, enrolling 20 percent of U.S. college students and 64 percent of all Latinx¹ students (Excelencia in Education 2017). Their growth in recent decades has been substantial. Yet unlike some of their MSI counterparts, HSIs have no required institutional mission to support students of color (Contreras et al. 2008). Rather, the vast majority of these colleges and universities became HSIs in recent decades as their student demographics changed. Federal designation as HSI is based not on an overt mission to serve but on having a relatively large population of full-time undergraduate Latinx students. Any nonprofit college or university can become designated an HSI when its full-time undergraduate student body is 25 percent Latinx, and at least half its students are from households that earn less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

Notably, the enrollment of new Latinx students that pushes a university across the 25 percent threshold does not precipitate inevitable change in the dominant racial logics of the institution. New students do, however, permit a university to meet eligibility criteria for multimillion dollar HSI grants from the federal government. Thus, although many colleges and universities have recently admitted larger Latinx student bodies—and those near the 25 percent threshold have an incentive to do so—the racialized practices of the institutions may still reflect predominantly White colorblind logics (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Hurtado and Ponjuan 2005). As more colleges and universities become designated HSIs, understanding their approaches to serving Latinxs is all the more critical.

In this article, we analyze a diverse set of approaches HSIs take to act explicitly and knowingly as racialized institutions. By this, we mean institutions that acknowledge a responsibility to affect students of a particular racialized group. Theoretical work and case studies have done well to articulate how some HSIs may undertake new

racialized organizational identity changes to the benefit of Latinx students (Garcia 2016, 2017; Hurtado and Alvarado 2015). However, because of data limitations, broad and systematic analyses of HSIs with larger samples are scant. In this article we present the results of a content analysis of all successful Title V “Developing Hispanic Serving Institution A” grant abstracts to the U.S. Department of Education from 2009 to 2016 ($n = 220$). Title V grants are the principal external funding source for HSIs, legislated to “expand educational opportunities for, and improve the academic attainment of, Hispanic students” (U.S. Department of Education 2017). Institutional criteria for the designation of HSI status were established precisely to define eligibility for federal funding programs like Title V (Valdez 2015). Thus, Title V grant abstracts are crucial sites to explore how HSIs conceptualize their roles and how they plan to serve their Latinx student population.

In the sections that follow we situate the contemporary roles of MSIs within the long history of racialized higher education in the United States, detail the efforts of early Latinx advocacy for higher education resources, and describe the history of how HSIs were defined. To our knowledge, this is the first historical account of HSIs detailed in sociology. We then draw from the unique definition of HSIs to consider variation in the racial logics that HSIs implement as federally funded MSIs.

MSIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Racial inequality is pervasive in higher education and, of course, not produced in a vacuum. It affects and is influenced by experiences of institutionalized racial inequality in other realms of social life. For example, racialized immigration enforcement and a vastly unequal criminal justice system add substantial burdens to youth and families seeking upward educational mobility (Aranda and Vaquera 2015; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Rios 2011; Shedd 2014; Van Cleve 2016). Segregated and inequitably funded K–12 schools pose additional barriers (Condrón and Roscigno 2003; Orfield and Frankenberg 2014). Because racial inequality exists in interlocking ways such that racialized disparities in any one institution frequently spill over to shape inequities in others, and across generations, unraveling the interlocked webs of racial injustice remains challenging (Enriquez 2015; Menjivar and Abrego 2012; Saenz et al. 2007; Sewell 2016). That many Whites historically sought out and now enjoy the benefits of a

vastly unequal racialized social system makes societal transformation a perpetually contested terrain (Bonilla-Silva 1997).

One critical strategy antiracists have taken to address racial disparities has been to advocate for colleges and universities with the mission or capacity to serve underrepresented college students (Espino and Cheslock 2008). Historically, this has led to progress in other realms of social life. When most higher education institutions locked their doors to Black people, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), the first subset of MSIs, were established and began to create opportunities for Black upward mobility (Allen and Jewell 2002). MSIs have grown and expanded to serve additional underrepresented populations and now make up a robust set of 800 colleges and universities across the nation. MSIs are composed of HBCUs, HSIs, tribal colleges and universities, and those with proportionally large enrollments of low income Asian American, Native American, or Pacific Islander students. Together, they make up roughly 25 percent of all U.S. higher education institutions and enroll approximately 40 percent of all students of color (Cunningham, Park, and Engle 2014).

Discussion of race in U.S. higher education is incomplete when the roles of MSIs are not considered. Although at times they have been controlled by White elites, MSIs have played central roles as key gateways to upward social mobility that otherwise would not exist (Allen and Jewell 2002). Moreover, MSIs enroll a critical mass of similarly situated students in the U.S. racial hierarchy. When supported financially and organizationally, these environments can produce desirable outcomes. Recent research indicates such contexts limit feelings of social isolation, increase solidarity, enhance academic self-concept and aspirations, improve test performance, and foster a greater capacity to link one's racialized group status to educational success (Cuellar 2014; Goldsmith 2004; Lee and Klugman 2013; Salerno and Reynolds 2017). However, portraits of MSIs can sometimes be painted with an overly broad brush, overlooking their distinct histories (Espino and Cheslock 2008), missions (Contreras et al. 2008), and, as we argue, efforts to redress racialized inequality in higher education.

In this article we focus principally on the racialized perspectives and practices of HSIs as MSIs. HSIs are among the largest and fastest growing subsets of MSIs (Núñez, Hurtado, and Galdeano 2016). There are currently 472 HSIs, more than any other MSI type, across 19 states and the

commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Excelencia in Education 2017). Unlike HBCUs and tribal colleges and universities, HSIs do not automatically receive federal funding from the government. They compete annually with one another for federal MSI grants. Title V "Developing Hispanic-serving Institution" grants are offered almost annually and are eligible to all federally designated HSIs. The grants typically last five years and amount to approximately \$2 million in total, with little variation in dollars received per recipient. Because HSIs are underfunded in comparison with non-HSIs, Title V serves as a principal funding source permitting HSIs to better address the needs of Latinx students (Ortega et al. 2015). Yet research on how HSIs seek to expend such funding is sparse. As colleges and universities are increasingly designated as HSIs, the circumstances are ripe for an exploration of how they conceptualize and address their chief responsibilities as institutions that serve Latinx students.

Yet before delving in to the analyses, we believe it crucial to briefly detail the history of HSIs in the United States. This history is infrequently described (but see Valdez 2015) and differs substantially from those of other MSIs, and the historical criteria upon which HSIs were legislated, we argue, substantially shapes their racialized logics today.

A Historical Need for HSIs?

The reasons MSIs were created vary considerably. Most HBCUs were developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries throughout periods of legal racial exclusion, often serving as the only option for Black young adults to attend institutions of higher education. This history of HBCUs is well developed (Allen and Jewell 2002; Allen et al. 2007; Anderson 1988, 2002; Jewell 2001). Yet it is often presumed that other MSIs were born out of similar periods of legal exclusion, political mobilization, or with underlying racial logics that sought to alleviate racialized inequities. Although Latinx activists drew from the successes of HBCUs in their struggle for higher education (MacDonald, Botti, and Clark 2007), these assumptions only partially reflect the less well known history of HSIs.

To be sure, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, national origin groups now understood as Latinx—Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, specifically—often experienced systematic educational segregation in primary and secondary schools due to their "colored" social

status (Donato 1997; *Mendez v. Westminster* 1946). There are also limited records of Puerto Rican migrant segregation into HBCUs (MacDonald and García 2003). Latinx segregation in higher education, however, is not well documented. Data on Latinx national origin groups were not regularly collected as “Hispanic” or “Latino” until the 1980 U.S. census, posing challenges for researchers. Moreover, the vast majority of people from Latinx national origin groups did not have the requisite primary school education to consider higher education, so official records are sparse (MacDonald and García 2003).

Yet we know that small subsets of financially well-off Latin American immigrants and U.S. born Latinos were not wholly excluded from White colleges and universities in the same manner as Black students. Some Latinos graduated from racially exclusionary colleges that otherwise limited enrollment to English-speaking White men (Kanellos 1997). A select few attended private Catholic colleges that supported bilingual education (MacDonald and García 2003). Because “Hispanic” or “Latino” did not yet exist as an ethnoracial group, and because Latinx national origin groups sometimes had access to exclusively White colleges and universities, no networks of Latinx higher education institutions akin to HBCUs were established throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (MacDonald and García 2003).

The notion of an HSI of higher education did not emerge until the late 1970s, around the same time that “Hispanic” came to be formally recognized as a group-based classification. Interest convergence between Latinx national origin groups, the state, and media led to the codification of the racialized category (Mora 2014). Construction of the “Hispanic” label was multifaceted and influenced by the difficulties Mexican American and Puerto Rican advocacy groups had securing resources for their respective communities from the federal government. Occupying similar marginal and racialized statuses across distinct geographical spaces, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans came to recognize they would have greater success securing federal resources when combined under a broader category of racial classification of Spanish-speaking national origin groups (Mora 2014). Our reading of the origins of HSIs indicates that higher education was among the early and primary issues advocated for in this manner.

According to MacDonald et al. (2007), “Latinos viewed the network of HBCUs as models for

institutions that graduated a ‘talented tenth’ of the African American community and... moved to create parallel responsive institutions” (p. 483). Throughout the 1970s, Latinx political mobilization led to the establishment of a few primarily Hispanic institutions of higher education akin to HBCUs, but startup costs were prohibitive, and securing accreditation status was challenging (MacDonald et al. 2007). The more pragmatic solution for Latinx higher education advocates was to garner federal support for the colleges already located in high Hispanic population destinations that were enrolling larger proportions of Latinx students. The process and criteria by which HSI was established as a racialized designation, we argue, continues to shape the dominant racial logics embedded within this subset of MSIs.

Defining HSIs

In 1978, the Hispanic Higher Education Coalition (HHEC) was established as the first known coalition across Latinx national origin groups to advocate for underfunded colleges and universities with large proportions of Hispanic students (Valdez 2015). Under HHEC, Latinx leaders identified Title III of the Higher Education Act (HEA) (1965), “Strengthening Developing Institutions,” as a federal program that could support the colleges and universities that enrolled larger proportions of their respective communities (Valdez 2015).

The Title III funding they advocated for was initially created in 1965 as part of the HEA to support underfunded colleges and universities and provided special funding to HBCUs. Because high-Latinx-enrolling colleges and universities were generally underfunded, some were sporadically receiving funding from Title III as underfunded institutions, but not as “Hispanic institutions.” This led to inadequate, unequal, and inconsistent resource streams for the colleges that Latinx students attended (Valdez 2015). Between 1979 and 1985, the HHEC repeatedly testified before Congress arguing that high-Hispanic-enrolling colleges were in need of Title III funding given the stark levels of educational inequality that Latinx youth across national origin distinctions experienced. In congressional testimony they explained that Latinxs dropped out of high school at rates greater than 50 percent, and average educational attainment was at the ninth grade level, substantially lower than all other racialized groups (Valdez 2015). Given the growth of the Latinx population, they argued that enrolling and

graduating Hispanic students was in the nation's social and economic interests.

Nonetheless, early efforts to secure racialized funding for "Hispanic colleges" were mostly unsuccessful. The congressional testimony HHEC provided, however, helped clarify how a HSI would later come to be defined. HHEC did not initially advocate a specific enrollment threshold for "high-enrolling Hispanic colleges" but weighed in when Senator Paul Simon sponsored a proposal for the 1984 HEA identifying Hispanic institutions as those with 40 percent Hispanic students (Valdez 2015). HHEC argued that this would be restrictive, and after deliberation with members of Congress, came to an agreement of 20 percent. Notably, the HHEC also advocated for a number of other eligibility criteria. They argued that to receive federal funding, high-Hispanic-enrolling colleges should be located in high Hispanic population areas, display "evidence of significant Hispanic staffing patterns at the faculty and administrative levels," and report "evidence of serious commitment to the needs of Hispanic learners and the Hispanic community," among others (Valdez 2015:15–16). Yet it was the enrollment threshold, and not these additional criteria, that made its way into the final proposal. The 1984 amendment was not approved, but the proposed enrollment figures had lasting implications for later HEA reauthorizations (MacDonald and García 2003).

Shortly thereafter, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities was founded in 1986 and picked up where HHEC left off (Espino and Cheslock 2008). Steered by administrators of high-Hispanic-enrolling colleges, its continued advocacy led to the official recognition of HSIs in the 1992 HEA. Therein, it was legislated that HSIs were defined as any nonprofit college or university with at least a 25 percent Hispanic undergraduate enrollment and a Hispanic undergraduate population of which 75 percent were low-income or first-generation college students. Subsequently, in 1996, Title III-A began to allocate a very limited set of funding for designated HSIs. This drew concerns from HBCUs, which were also funded from Title III, that they would lose resources (MacDonald et al. 2007). After debate, funding expanded for both groups when HSIs became eligible for a distinct, Title V Developing Hispanic-serving Institutions Program as part of the 1998 HEA reauthorization. The 1998 amendment also expanded HSI eligibility by decreasing the low-income student population threshold from 75 percent to 50 percent and dropping the first-generation college student

requirement altogether (Espino and Cheslock 2008). Eligibility criteria and the funding structure have since remained consistent.

The Growing Reach of HSIs

In effect, the 1992 HEA bill led to the classification of 105 preexisting colleges and universities as HSIs. The designation of HSI status was transformative, as it marked federal recognition of the challenges that Latinx groups had securing higher education and expanded racialized funding for upward mobility. However, insofar as HSI status was based solely on student enrollments, some new HSIs lacked a critical mass of Latinx faculty members and administrators, and there were no assurances that HSIs would reorganize their organizational structures to specifically "serve" Hispanic students.

As a result of these definitional criteria, HSIs have experienced exponential growth over the past two decades. Nearly one in every seven U.S. colleges and universities is now designated as an HSI and has Title V grant eligibility (Excelencia in Education 2017). An additional 323 colleges and universities are recognized as emerging HSIs because they have Latinx student enrollments of greater than 15 percent but not yet 25 percent. Migration from Latin America, the diffusion of Latinx migrants from traditional gateway cities to new destinations (Lichter 2012; Williams et al. 2009), and higher rates of college attendance among Latinxs over the past two decades (Krogstad 2016) have transformed a number of predominantly White institutions into federally designated HSIs (Núñez et al. 2016). These colleges and universities are now tasked with addressing the needs of Latinx students. Notably, federal funds allocated to HSIs have not kept pace with HSI expansion, inducing greater competition between them for Title V grants. Thus, an analysis of Title V grant abstracts will detail not only how HSIs conceptualize their roles as federally funded MSIs but also the programmatic efforts that the state legitimizes as adequate to serve Latinx students.

In general, sociologists have done a remarkable job detailing some of the insidious mechanisms by which Latinxs experience racialized inequities in K–12 and higher education (Irizarry 2015; Murguía and Saenz 2002; Ochoa 2014; Peguero 2011). However, substantially less sociological focus has been placed on the racialized logics and organizational strategies of HSIs, which now educate nearly two thirds of all Latinx college students. Insofar as

higher education institutions shape leadership pipelines, the racialized mechanisms embedded and normalized within HSIs have the capacity to ameliorate, more deeply embed, or exacerbate broad and complex systems of racialized inequality Latinxs face. In light of enrollments' being the definitive criteria for HSI status, rather than an expressed mission to serve Latinxs, it is crucial that we consider how HSIs are conceptualizing their roles as racialized institutions. Are these MSIs actively seeking to redress racial inequalities as early Latinx leaders advocated for? And if so, how?

DATA AND METHODS

We use primarily qualitative analytical techniques to assess how HSIs conceptualize their roles as MSIs in Title V grant application abstracts. Title V grants serve as the principal federal funding source for HSIs. After submitting official records of student demographic information that match eligibility criteria, colleges and universities are officially designated as HSIs and may then apply for grants from the U.S. Department of Education's Title V Developing Hispanic-serving Institutions Program. According to the Department of Education (2017), the purpose of the program is to

expand educational opportunities for, and improve the academic attainment of, Hispanic students, and to expand and enhance the academic course offerings, program quality, and institutional stability of the colleges and universities that educate the majority of Hispanic students and help large numbers of Hispanic and other low-income students complete postsecondary degrees.

Grant funding is authorized for activities that "contribute to the carrying out of [these] purposes."

For comparison's sake, we excluded from our analysis all grant application abstracts from colleges and universities located in Puerto Rico (32 in total), because the educational system, its challenges, and the racial demography of the island differ substantially from those of the U.S. mainland (Núñez and Elizondo 2015). We also excluded all "cooperative development grants," because half of awardees are not designated as HSIs. Cooperative development grants permit one eligible HSI to seek federal funding in cooperation with one or more (often larger) non-HSIs to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. This left us with the entire population of successful grant application abstracts from

U.S. mainland HSIs between 2009 and 2016 ($n = 220$). As part of the Title V grant application, a one-page abstract is required, providing an overview of the university's or college's plans for the grant. All abstracts analyzed in this study are of public access and can be found at the Department of Education Web site (<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/idedshsi/awards.html>). Each abstract was entered and analyzed in the qualitative research software program NVivo as an independent document.

Analysis began with an inductive line-by-line coding of 30 abstracts (roughly four per year), permitting categories and then key themes to emerge from the data (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The second author, in constant communication with the first, used this approach to assess broadly the structure of abstract content and what was being described, securing information necessary for later stages of analysis. Categories included "objectives," "curriculum," "faculty," "infrastructure," "finances," "problems/needs," "student centered resources," "student descriptions," and others. After categorization, we collaboratively transitioned to a focused coding of the abstracts to identify patterns from the codes previously identified (e.g., curricular changes tailored to distance learning courses vs. face-to-face, infrastructure changes tailored to Latinx students versus all students) (Lofland et al. 2006). We then proceeded with a full line-by-line coding of the population of abstracts. This too was driven primarily by the second author, in constant communication with the first. Upon completion of focused coding, a stark pattern emerged: the majority of proposed programmatic endeavors, independent of our category describing which aspect of the college or university proposed funding would address (e.g., infrastructure, faculty, curriculum), were not tailored specifically to Latinx students. Here, a new focused code emerged detailing the overarching orientation of each abstract as (1) Latinx centered, (2) colorblind, or (3) usurping. The first author then returned to the population of abstracts to code entire abstracts on this single theme, leaving a small minority of borderline cases (<10) open for discussion with the second author until consensus was reached for each case.

Abstracts were coded as Latinx centered when they explicitly and exclusively focused on programmatic efforts catered to Latinx students independent of their particular aims (e.g., curricular changes, infrastructure changes, new student-centered resources). Some colleges and universities, for example, created summer-bridge programs tailored specifically to address challenges their

new Latinx students were having with college adjustment. Another initiated a new Latinx peer mentoring program. In such instances, Latinx students were central to all programmatic efforts. We also considered cases wherein colleges had very large Latinx enrollments. In such cases, even though Latinxs are not always explicitly centered in the abstracts' description of Title V initiatives, they remain the overwhelming beneficiaries of proposed programs and changes. Therefore, we linked all abstracts to Latinx student enrollment data from the 2015 Integrated Post-Secondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) and coded all abstracts for colleges with 75 percent or greater Latinx student enrollment as Latinx centered.

We coded abstracts as colorblind when Latinx students were ancillary beneficiaries of Title V initiatives. By this we mean cases wherein Latinx students were not centered and focal to the expenditure of Title V funding. These made up the large majority of abstracts (85 percent). In some instances, colleges proposed multiple new initiatives with Title V funding, and only a portion of them addressed Latinx students specifically. In other cases, Latinx students went entirely unmentioned in lieu of initiatives to fund new programs, infrastructure, distance-learning tools, endowments, and other causes that presumably the entire campus community could benefit from equally. We refer to this code as "colorblind" because these institutions are not explicitly discriminatory in their efforts, but they do not structure their MSI funded programmatic efforts in a way that seeks to redress racialized educational inequalities or to serve specifically the students who make them eligible for this funding stream. In effect, their efforts are blind to the racialized inequalities foundational to the emergence of HSI as a designation. This is akin to Bonilla-Silva's (2006) articulation of colorblind ideology that proliferates among those who claim not to harbor racial animus yet refuse to support structural solutions to racial inequalities.

We coded abstracts as usurping for all HSIs that focused on programmatic efforts and infrastructure projects that Latinx students were disproportionately unlikely to benefit from. In such instances, non-Latinx students or, in some cases, the institution as a whole was substantially more likely to benefit from Title V grants than Latinx students. Such expenditure of funds serves to exacerbate racial inequalities within these institutions.

In the presentation of our results, we display the coded portions of individual abstracts that reflect the thematic findings. We also include institutional information about each HSI from IPEDS,

including the proportion of Latinx students and the institution type (community college or four-year university) for each abstract.

RESULTS

Racialized Perceptions

As institutions specifically tasked with serving Latinx students, HSIs' characterizations of students offer a starting point for understanding how they conceptualize their roles. Our analyses indicate that when HSIs describe Latinx students, they tend to do so in similar ways. In their quests to secure funding, HSIs frequently problematize their Latinx student populations as lacking in basic academic skills, knowledge, and preparation. Students are described at the outset as "at risk," "underprepared," low income, and sometimes as lacking the know-how to succeed in higher education. Notably, we find that these descriptors are rarely contextualized as arrangements of marginalization that have disproportionately shaped their experiences but rather as student characteristics that universities must overcome. Moreover, the unique strengths of students who come from racially and socioeconomically marginalized positions are rarely mentioned (Yosso 2005). In some cases, status as a first-generation student is contextualized as a marker of vulnerability rather than an indication of determination or resilience (Yosso 2005). Below we detail three typical descriptions:

These high-risk students are faltering at the "starting line," failing to master developmental education courses in reading, writing, and math and/or successfully transition into college-level gateway courses. (Abstract 88, community college, 29 percent Latinx)

Most of [regional four-year] first year students, particularly those who are Hispanic, low-income, first-generation and underrepresented, arrive at college under-prepared. (Abstract 96, regional-four year, 58 percent Latinx)

The majority of students come to [regional four-year] without the skills necessary for academic success... [The] lack of educational goals leads to low persistence. (Abstract 98, regional-four year, 56 percent Latinx)

Rios (2011) argued that when individuals and organizations conceptualize youth primarily as "at risk" or as deficient in some manner, it can perpetuate

the very stigmas that they may be seeking to eradicate. Notably, a small subset of HSIs differed considerably from the rest and reflect the distinct starting points that HSIs can draw from in their efforts to serve Latinx students:

Situated along the U.S.-Mexico border, [regional four-year] enrolls primarily from its surrounding community, allowing us the privilege to serve a predominately first-generation, Hispanic and low socio-economic student population. Our students are intelligent, motivated, and ready to learn; therefore, we understand that if we provide them with well-scaffolded, structurally sound support, they can move from the idea of a college education and career, to an earned degree and professional ventures that match their aspirations. (Abstract 124, regional-four year, 81 percent Latinx)

This border university enrolls a larger share of Latinxs than most other HSIs and has done so throughout its long history. Notably, they conceptualize students as motivated and describe the institution's role as one that can build from students' strengths by providing methodical and sound institutional support.

The differences we demarcate here are primarily differences in perspective, but we argue that they reflect different underlying racial logics. When describing their student population, some HSIs have a conceptualization of what an average student should be: "prepared," not placed into remedial courses, and with some unstated but still recognized level of academic skills. In effect, they center preconceived notions of "preparedness" informed primarily by a deracialized ideal-type student, then compare Latinx students with that assessment and plan to address recorded "deficiencies" for Latinxs who do not look the same. By centering a prototypical deracialized ideal-type student, HSIs are neglecting to consider the insidious effects of U.S. racial stratification on students' livelihoods that cultivate a different set of skills, knowledges, and strengths (Yosso 2005). In contrast, a smaller proportion of HSIs like the one detailed in abstract 124 operate from a perspective that centers the core strengths of their actual Latinx student body and propose to expand and build outward from them. The latter is a race-conscious approach congruent with students' experiences and aspirations, whereas the former aligns with a colorblind and predominantly White racialized logic that conceptualizes deviations from unmarked White norms as abnormalities (Yosso 2005).

This is not to say that HSIs operating from a "deficiencies" or colorblind approach are incapable of "serving" their Latinx students, because we find that the vast majority of HSIs seek to benefit Latinx students in varying capacities. Moreover, some institutions may feel they need to draw from a deficiencies approach to secure federal funding. Nonetheless, the manners in which students experience and understand the ideological positionality of their institutions is likely to affect their symbolic attachment and persistence in the institution (Gloria and Robinson Kurpius 1996). More important, when such logics permeate institutional contexts, they can affect how students see their own racialized identity as a detriment to or purveyor of educational success (Salerno and Reynolds 2017). To examine further, we turn to institutions' racialized practices.

Racialized Practices

In addition to comparing HSI conceptualizations of students, we were primarily interested in how they seek to use federal funding. Expending Title V HSI funding is an explicitly racialized practice. The funding exists to serve a racially marginalized group. Insofar as two-thirds of all Latinx students attend HSIs, the manners in which HSIs deploy said funding have the capacity to ameliorate, more deeply embed, or exacerbate broader racial inequalities in higher education. Again, we argue that the programs, initiatives, and infrastructure HSIs seek to establish with Title V funding can be organized to directly serve Latinx students by addressing their specific needs, experiences, and goals. Alternatively, HSIs can seek to expend funding in ways that center a prototypical ideal type student, or simply all students, such that Latinx students would be ancillary beneficiaries. The former reflects a critical and race conscious approach, whereas the latter, again, represents a dominant colorblind logic.

Latinx Centered

Although the proportions varied, we found evidence of both logics operating in Title V HSI grant applications, sometimes simultaneously. We begin with an example reflective of a Latinx-centered approach:

[Regional four-year] will address the achievement gap among its Latino students through innovative student services, culturally relevant curriculum, and meaningful co-curricular offerings aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates. . . . The university recently funded . . . a new Latina Center.

Building on these efforts, the Title V grant will fund innovations in Student Services including a Bilingual/Bicultural Financial Aid Specialist and Cultural Transition Academic Advisor; Bilingual/Bicultural math tutors with tablets to conduct in-person and online tutoring; and, peer mentors for the Academic Advisor, Financial Aid Specialist... and Latina Center (in person and online chat office hours).

Culturally validating curriculum will include the creation of first year General Education courses with focus on Latino Identities; Learning Communities geared for Latinos in each college; Supplemental Writing and Math Courses in *hybrid* format; and, Faculty Professional Development for Course Enhancement (to improve courses found to be high need, low success for Latino students). Meaningful and Co-Curricular offerings include Research Assistants; Second Year Latino Males Mentor Program; Programming addressing contemporary issues shaping Latino students' educational experiences;...and [a] student computer lab for Latina Center. (Abstract 189, regional four-year, 41 percent Latinx)

Notwithstanding the opening reference to a decontextualized "achievement gap," the planned racialized practices of this regional four-year university center the specific experiences of its Latinx student body. Each initiative detailed in the HSI grant abstract concerns the experiences and successes of Latinx students. For example, in a context wherein the majority of students are not Latinx, a well-resourced Latina center can anchor Latinx student experiences and decrease feelings of social isolation. The proposed hiring of bilingual and bicultural staff indicates that the institution is considering the specific language abilities of students and families. Moreover, the development and enhancement of courses that center Latinx experiences is known to have a positive impact on students. Such courses increase Latinx academic engagement, sense of collegiate belonging, and assist with students' transitions to college, among others (Hurtado and Ponjuan 2005; Nuñez 2011). By catering specifically to Latinx students, these efforts actively serve Latinx interests. Yet this example is but one of four (out of 220) that sought funding to support a Latinx-infused curriculum or a Latina/o student center. Moreover, the Latinx-centered approach this university exemplifies was representative of only 10 percent of all abstracts (22 of 220).

Colorblind Approaches

The large majority of abstracts (85 percent [188 of 220]) detailed programs and initiatives tailored to a much broader student body such that all students could benefit. Latinx students were centered in some programmatic efforts and not others, and in some cases, they had the potential to benefit to the same degree as other students. In these instances, colleges and universities sought racialized funding but did not plan to expend it in a manner that would address broad racialized inequalities in higher education. In effect, these are colorblind approaches to expending explicitly racialized funding. The following example represents some of the most common patterns in Title V grant abstracts:

Key elements of our Implementation Strategy include an innovative adaptation of a proven summer internship program for Hispanic, low-income, and/or at-risk students, focusing on internships in Health and Science, dedicated advising, and a course designed to help equip students to succeed in STEM. Equipment and supplies needed to provide up-to-date learning and research environments are also requested as the lack of good equipment keeps talented student researchers from reaching their full potential. The equipment factors into a complete and total renovation of the [college's] science building just underway as of the submission of this proposal. All combined, the elements will strengthen [Regional four-year's] support for students and increase the college's capacity for science learning and research. (Abstract 199, regional four-year, 44 percent Latinx)

The university in abstract 199 proposes initiatives that serve both Latinx students and other enrolled students. In this case, the college proposed a summer internship program and a new course that Latinx students and other students interested in health and science can benefit from. The institution also proposed funding for equipment and supplies to furnish their under-construction science building. Presumably all students have the potential to benefit from new equipment, but research equipment is a necessary expenditure independent of whether the university were to receive a Title V grant. Nonetheless, because it "strengthens" a college or university with a large proportion of Latinx students, this is a federally approved use of funds under Title V guidelines. This is true even in cases in which HSIs do not advocate for resources in a manner that specifically details how Latinx students benefit. Notably, we found the failure to identify precisely how programs or

initiatives help or advantage Latinx students to be common. This was true even for colleges and universities at which non-Latinxs made up the large majority of the student body:

[Plans funded by Title V] include: (1) making a three-credit First-Year Experience course mandatory for all new students in their first semester; (2) through advising services, assisting all first-year students in development of a personal degree map, learning how to use online tools to chart their educational progress; (3) [Establish] EMERGE, a summer bridge program with one core course and credit for high-need students; (4) stretched courses with credits in math and English during the first year as an alternative to non-credit developmental courses; (5) increased referrals to the Learning Support Center through an Early Alert System and advisor referrals; and (6) assistance programs to ensure that enrolled students complete registration for the coming semester and financial aid application for the coming year. (Abstract 212, regional four-year, 35 percent Latinx)

In the case of abstract 212, a college at which two thirds of students are non-Latinx, there is not one mention of Hispanic or Latinx students in their proposed programmatic initiatives to serve students. Here, all proposed programs and services work to benefit all enrolled students, and thus, Latinx students are presumed to benefit by default. Together, abstract 199 and abstract 212 are illustrative of an approach taken by the vast majority of HSIs (85 percent): to propose programs and initiatives that do not focus principally on Latinx student experiences. We find clearly that most HSIs do not center Latinx students in their efforts to transform their institutions with federal HSI funding. As enrolled students at these colleges, Latinxs have the capacity to benefit from Title V funding, but not in a manner that addresses broad racial inequalities in higher education. Space considerations limit our ability to provide additional examples, but the most prominent finding of our analysis is that the large majority of colleges and universities tasked with serving Hispanic students are not operating under a racialized logic that prioritizes the eradication of racial inequalities in higher education, but rather, a colorblind one.

Usurping Resources

We now reflect upon a minority of cases (4 percent of all abstracts) that seek HSI funding in a manner

that knowingly supports efforts that Latinx students are disproportionately unlikely to benefit from in comparison with their peers. We label this the usurping-resources approach. Funding, in these cases, was allocated to infrastructure, programs, and curriculums wherein Whites and high-socioeconomic status students are generally overrepresented:

Despite area demand for professionals in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields...just 3.6 percent of our Hispanic students have declared STEM majors.... Infrastructure deficiencies, including outdated science instrumentation, technology limitations, and inadequate facilities, undermine the University's ability to connect Hispanic, low income students to effective Science, Technology, Engineering and Math learning environments.

The activity will deliver extensive faculty development in Web-based instruction, supported by Faculty Studio tools and resources and resulting in the redesign/conversion of a host of core General Education and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math courses to highly-effective online and blended... formats.... A newly-developed Environmental/Chemistry Lab will support blended STEM curricula, including newly developed introductory courses in Environmental Technology, Energy Technology, and Engineering Technology—areas of STEM growth in [state]. (Abstract 18, regional four-year, 39 percent Latinx)

Here, we see a college that is majority non-Latinx (61 percent), aware that more than 96 percent of its Latinx students are not STEM majors. Yet this institution seeks to expend a multimillion dollar HSI grant into its STEM programs. Expenditure of HSI funds in a 39 percent Latinx college at which only 3.6 percent of Latinx students major in STEM disciplines, as described here, is not a Latinx-serving initiative. In this case, funds to serve Latinx students are being expended on programmatic efforts wherein those at the top of the U.S. racial hierarchy (Whites) are well represented and Latinxs are underrepresented. By allocating funds that were established to advance Hispanic educational opportunities to programs, infrastructure, and initiatives that White students will be beneficiaries of, these HSIs are promulgating a usurping of resources from the racially marginalized to those atop the U.S. racial hierarchy. Such practices serve primarily to

Table 1. Characteristics of Hispanic-serving Institutions Receiving Title V Grants across Racial Logics (2009–2016).

	HSI Latinx Centered (<i>n</i> = 17)		Colorblind (<i>n</i> = 142)		Usurping Resources (<i>n</i> = 8)	
	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>	Percent	<i>n</i>
Public	11.0	16	84.3	123	4.8	7
Private	4.8	1	90.5	19	4.8	1
Four-year	10.0	6	86.7	52	3.3	2
Two-year	10.3	11	84.1	90	5.6	6
Percentage Latinx enrollment	65.5	—	45.7	—	47.0	—
Percentage Latinx faculty ^a	29.5	—	13.2	—	16.8	—
Totals	10.2	17	85.0	142	4.8	8

Note: Table includes data for all HSI Title V grant recipients included in the Integrated Post-Secondary Educational Data System (*n* = 167). HSI = Hispanic-serving institution.

^aMissing data on this item reduces *n* to 132.

exacerbate preexisting systems of racialized educational inequality.

Supplementary Analysis

Upon completion of the content analysis, we sought to examine potential patterns among HSIs across the three typologies. Drawing from IPEDS data, we explored variation in Latinx-centered, colorblind, and usurping approaches across public and private colleges and two-year and four-year colleges and across Latinx student enrollment and proportion Latinx faculty members.

We also explored for potential differences across U.S. states but found no meaningful patterns. With little variation across the three racial logics and missing values on some key items from IPEDS, our ability to discern reliable multivariate relationships is limited. As such, we report the raw percentages and totals in Table 1. Here, we see no notable variation across public and private colleges and across two-year and four-year colleges. There are, however, noteworthy differences in the proportion of Latinx students and Latinx faculty members. On average, HSIs adopting Latinx-centered approach have a larger proportion of Latinx students (65 percent) compared with their colorblind (46 percent) and usurping (47 percent) counterparts. Note, however, that this is biased by our coding scheme, which situates all HSIs with at least 75 percent Latinx enrollments as Latinx serving. Thus, perhaps the most important pattern we discern is related to the proportion of Latinx faculty members across institutions. On average, colleges drawing from a Latinx-centered approach have a substantially

larger share of Latinx faculty members (30 percent) than do their colorblind (13 percent) and usurping (17 percent) counterparts.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

HSIs will continue to make up a growing proportion of U.S. colleges and universities and a larger share of the nation's MSIs. HSIs have the capacity to ameliorate, more deeply embed, or exacerbate racial inequalities in higher education, and our primary goal in this study was to examine how HSIs conceptualize and seek to perform their roles as MSIs as they plan to expend racialized federal funding. Results indicate great consistency in how HSIs characterize their Latinx student population and notable variation in how they planned to expend HSI funding. In both their racialized perceptions of Latinx students and their intended programmatic efforts, findings illustrate that the large majority of HSIs do not center Latinx students. Rather, most HSIs draw from a colorblind racialized logic that conceptualizes deviations from unmarked White norms as abnormalities (Yosso 2005) and fails to prioritize the amelioration of broad racial inequalities in their expenditures of HSI funds.

This is not to say that Latinx students do not benefit from Title V funding. Such resources are critical, as they substantially increase the number of valuable educational opportunities and programs open to Latinx students across the nation. Given that HSIs are underfunded in comparison with other colleges and universities, Title V funding

plays a vital role in Latinx students' educational experiences (Ortega et al. 2015). However, we find that in the majority of cases (85 percent), Latinxs benefit as ancillary recipients of HSIs' programmatic efforts. HSIs generally promote Title V programs and initiatives that all students have the capacity to benefit from, which does little to redress racialized inequities in education. Inasmuch, we argue that HSIs expend funding in a manner inconsistent with the initial goals of early Latinx higher education advocates (Valdez 2015).

Perhaps most remarkable about the results of our study is not what was included in Title V abstracts, but what was missing. Only two proposals mentioned strengthening an ethnic studies curriculum, which is known to have broad and positive impacts on Latinx students (Garcia and Okhidoi 2015). No abstracts explicitly discussed the racial marginalization that occurs on college campuses, and thus, there were no stated proposals to address those needs. There were no proposals to address the concerns of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals students, or students who are family to undocumented siblings, parents, or others. The absence is glaring during a period (2009–2016) wrought with escalating rates of deportations and family separations among Latinxs (Abrego 2014; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013). Moreover, there were no calls to support the mental health of Latinx students who have been affected by racialized immigration enforcement, a resource which is sorely needed (Vaquera, Aranda, and Sousa-Rodriguez 2017). In most cases, Latinx students' particular needs went unmentioned.

Drawing from Moore and Bell (2017), we find support for the notion that tacit white norms can persist in the organization, curricula, and policy implementation of demographically non-White institutions of higher education. As Moore and Bell noted, student racial demographics do not inevitably influence the racialized logics of the institution. Reflecting on our findings, we apply these insights to the case of HSIs and argue that when MSIs are officially classified on the basis of student demographics, White institutional power at the top of an institutional hierarchy has the capacity to cloak itself in a marginalized racial identity in order to use racialized resources for its own ends. They can don the MSI label as they see fit, advertising or wearing it when it benefits them and hiding it thereafter. This may be especially true of institutions that narrowly meet demographic criteria (near 25 percent), as they are less likely to be perceived as predominantly non-White institutions by the

broader public. Presumably, such practices are more likely to occur when institutional power brokers (administrations and faculty members) are racially, culturally, or ideologically incongruent with the experiences and social locations of minority students. We argue, in instances in which student demographics confer MSI status, that higher education institutions need not actually transform their racialized institutional practices or logics to align with new (Latinx) students' experiences. Quite the opposite, our findings suggest that federal funding is often allocated in a manner that reifies dominant colorblind racialized logics, legitimizing HSIs colorblind practices as sufficient to meeting their obligations to Latinx students.

Notably, as a handful of examples illustrate, it is possible for HSIs to use Title V funding in a manner that prioritizes the Latinx student population. In addition to funding initiatives that stem from colorblind logics, the state also regularly awards Title V funding to colleges and universities that draw from a Latinx-centered approach. Approximately 10 percent of all HSI recipients between 2009 and 2015 have done so. An important step for future research is to consider why this is not more common. In the long fight for federal recognition of HSIs, early advocates argued that recipients of federal resources should provide "evidence of significant Hispanic staffing patterns at the faculty and administrative levels" and "evidence of serious commitment to the needs of Hispanic learners and the Hispanic community" (Valdez 2015). Advocates believed that it was not only the racial demography of students but the racial demography of power within institutions that would shape the degree and manner by which Latinx students can benefit from federal MSI programs. We find limited support for early advocates' calls in our supplementary analysis examining the proportion of Latinx faculty members across institution types. Institutions drawing from Latinx-centered logics had a substantially larger share of Latinx faculty members than those that drew from colorblind and usurping logics. In future analyses, it will be worthwhile to examine similar sources of variation among upper administrations. If early advocates were right, we should expect to find that HSIs with a greater share of Latinx administrators would be more likely to operate from a Latinx-centered approach. However, it is also possible that Latinxs who advance to upper administration positions are those who are less likely to disrupt dominant institutional logics. These will be important considerations for future research.

Moreover, Although this is the first known study to examine planned expenditures of HSI grants, it is not without limitations. Among the most central is that there are no known records of HSIs that applied for but failed to receive Title V funding. Thus, we were able only to analyze grant recipients. It is plausible that those drawing from Latinx-centered approaches are systematically less likely to be awarded Title V grants. This seems unlikely because Latinx-centered efforts are funded with some regularity (10 percent), but not out of the realm of possibility. In addition, more comprehensive institutional data of all HSIs will permit greater understanding of reliable patterns.

In summary, we argue that when HSIs center the needs of Latinx students in their MSI initiatives, they parallel what most Latinx leaders sought when they advocated for the designation of HSIs. This is the common conceptualization of MSIs roles' in higher education: to develop opportunities and resources tailored primarily for underrepresented students. Yet the most common racialized logic of HSIs varies considerably from that ideal; it is a logic that fails to center the racialized disparities and racialized experiences that shape Latinx students' lives. In such cases, we argue that the institution and student roles are reversed; rather than being characterized as minority-serving institutions, they can be more aptly characterized as minority-served institutions, or institutions served by minority students. Too often in their quests to secure funding as MSIs, HSIs fail to center the Latinx students who permit their very eligibility.

NOTE

1. *Latinx* is used as a gender-neutral and gender-inclusive term for Latina/o.

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