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Answering the Call: Hispanic-Serving Institutions as Leaders in the Quest for Access, Excellence, and Equity in American Higher Education

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The Intentional and the Grassroots Hispanic-Serving Institutions:
A Critical History of Two Universities

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Abstract

This study examines the institutional histories of Loma Verde University and Azul City University and their development over time into Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Utilizing a theoretical framework of transformational change, we focus on various aspects of these institutions, including curriculum, the allocation of physical spaces, and the creation of programs that specifically serve Latinx students. The study makes use of archival documents that tell the story of the struggles at each institution to cultivate a campus that addressed the needs of Latinx students to promote their long-term academic success. The findings suggest that these institutions were on paths that were heavily influenced by their local contexts and student population; that the transformational process to serving Latinx students was long and faced setbacks; and that their successes came in different forms. These conclusions indicate that the histories of Hispanic-Serving Institutions may be as rich and diverse as the Latinx population itself, furthering the notion that these institutions are unique among other types of Minority-Serving Institutions.

There is a growing focus on Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) by policy makers and researchers considering that these institutions enroll approximately 60% of Latinx college students (Santiago, Taylor, & Calderón Galdeano, 2016). HSIs are defined as two-year and four-year institutions with at least 25 percent Latinx undergraduate students (Núñez, Hurtado, & Calderón Galdeano, 2015), and the number of HSIs has now reached over 400 across 21 states and Puerto Rico (*Excelencia* in Education, 2016). As a result, HSIs enroll notable numbers of Latinx students, but it is unclear to what degree or how they actually *serve* this student population (Contreras et al., 2008; Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). As such, the HSI designation has been called a "manufactured identity" (Contreras et al., 2008), suggesting that this designation is not authentic nor universally understood.

Previous research suggests that an HSI organizational identity may present itself through a commitment to its surrounding community rather than solely focusing on one racial/ethnic student population (Garcia, 2016). Given the present and unprecedented growth of this sector of MSIs, HSIs are often seen as a product of the current demographic changes in American postsecondary enrollment (Gasman, Nguyen, & Conrad, 2015; Núñez, Hurtado, & Calderón Galdeano, 2015). As such, few studies in the extant literature on HSIs have examined the histories of individual HSIs or incorporated a historical perspective to the analysis of the development of HSIs over time (for examples, see Doran, 2015; Gasman, Nguyen, & Conrad, 2015; Laden, 2001). This perspective of looking at change over time at HSIs may be key to showing whether or not the HSI designation is a "manufactured identity" or if it denotes a discernable organizational mission.

The purpose of this study is to fill these gaps in our understanding of the identity of HSIs and how they evolve. To do so, we compare the distinct histories of two four-year universities and their development of their identities over time into HSIs, drawing from institutional documents to trace the progression of these institutions as HSIs over time. The first institution, Loma Verde University (LVU, a pseudonym), was created in 1969 with the explicit intention of serving the South Texas region, an area that has historically been predominantly Latinx and continues to be so today. The second, Azul City University (ACU, a pseudonym), was established in an urban area in the Midwest in 1867. Its development as an HSI was far more gradual, resulting from changing demographics over decades in the area around its campus and subsequent social activism on the part of Latinx students and faculty.

This study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What were key moments in the histories of Loma Verde University and Azul City University that shaped their HSI identities over time?

2. How did these moments bring about transformative change to support Latinx students on these campuses?

To answer these questions, we examine the processes that these institutions underwent as they became HSIs, how they built their capacity to serve Latinx students and the challenges they faced in terms of academic programs, student services, funding, and so on. These universities were chosen for this study given their different routes to becoming HSIs; we thus term LVU and ACU as "intentional" and "grassroots" HSIs, respectively. The histories of these institutions are useful for researchers, practitioners, and administrators as they illustrate concrete examples of how campus agents (e.g., administrators, students, and faculty) responded to the challenges posed to expanding services to Latinx students in terms of programming, physical space, and curricula. These responses can inform the work of stakeholders in creating long-lasting change on their campuses in creating a Hispanic-Serving identity.

Literature Review

The geographical spread and institutional diversity of HSIs makes research on how HSIs serve Latinx students challenging and necessitates work that is contextually rich and includes local histories (Núñez & Elizondo, 2015). Hurtado and Ruiz Alvarado (2015) identify a number of factors that contribute to a dynamic and supportive campus climate for Latinx students, and at the organizational level, they specifically name student and faculty composition and links to the local communities. Notably, a study by Garcia (2012) concludes that institutional resources and selectivity influenced student success at four-year HSIs more than student body composition. Given that both institutions in this study have traditionally been regional universities that provide broad access to their communities, we focus on institutional programs and resources and how these have been invested in to serve Latinx students and promote a Hispanic-Serving identity on campuses.

Academic Programs

The literature suggests that various types of academic programs promote Latinx student success. First, Ethnic Studies programs in both K-12 and higher education provide Latinx students with spaces in which they can explore and negotiate issues related to their identity and culture (Cammarota, 2007; Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). Despite the well-documented backlash against these programs, particularly in Arizona (Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, & Marx, 2014), these programs form spaces for students to engage with material about their own culture while also learning how to critically engage with others who have different backgrounds and viewpoints than their own (Núñez, 2011). One concern about Ethnic Studies program is how pervasive their presence and content are within the whole institution rather than as an academic silo (Cabán, 2003; Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015).

HSIs in Texas have faced criticism for their overall focus on providing degrees in low-paying, service-oriented fields and prepare students for the workforce rather than professional schools (Satterfield & Rincones, 2008). There is a well-documented need to boost Latinx graduates in STEM programs, and HSIs have been identified as crucial participants in addressing the disparity in Latinx students in STEM fields (Núñez & Elizondo, 2015). However, a recent report finds that while thirteen of the top twenty-five institutions awarding STEM bachelor's degrees to Latinx students were HSIs, these institutions are geographically isolated in California, Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico and degrees awarded were concentrated at the bachelor's level and below (Santiago, Taylor, and Calderón Galdeano, 2015).

Student Services and Programming

The diversity of Latinx students themselves also necessitates a wide array of student services. Latinx students are often treated as a monolithic group despite the diversity of subgroups (Ortiz, Valerio, & Lopez, 2012). These students are more likely to be first-generation students (Saunders & Serna, 2004), they may have wide variation in terms of bilingualism and ESL (Harklau, Siegel, & Losey, 1999), they are more likely to work for pay during their college experiences (Núñez & Sansone, 2016), among many other needs. Short-term programs and interventions to fix short-term challenges for these students often come and go and fade out because administrators fail to make these programs part of the permanent fabric of the institution.

The creation of dedicated spaces for multicultural student groups continues to be a struggle in institutions (McCoy, 2011). However, culture centers are important in providing student groups their own spaces to create support systems and to discuss issues relevant to their population (Lozano, 2010). For Latinx students, especially at Predominantly White Institutions, the creation of a culture center could be the only place where these students have to develop their own racial and ethnic identities and to build a cultural awareness about themselves (Lozano, 2010). In effect, academic programs and dedicated spaces for Latinx students are two ways HSIs and other institutional types can provide validating experiences to students by enabling them to see themselves reflected in the institution (Rendón, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

We examine the development of these HSIs through the lens of transformational change as a means of examining how certain values or commitments become embedded in the fabric of an organization. Transformational change is characterized by a deep and intentional change to an organization that permeates all levels of an institution and occurs over time (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). One marker for whether transformational change has occurred within an organization is through an examination of its structural elements, including curriculum, funding, space allocations, and policies related to the change (Kezar, 2014). In short, this type of change is "the attitudinal change that is simultaneously manifested in an organization's structures" (Kezar, 2014, p. 63). Judging whether transformational change has occurred is complicated to ascertain, but we specifically looked for practices that were responsive to the needs of the Latinx community through programming, pedagogy, and curriculum. These types of structural changes were observable over time in institutional documents such as bulletins, student newspapers, and media coverage on the sites of this study. Through the analysis process, we focused on programs, spaces, and interventions that gained permanent status within the institutions.

Methodology

In order to examine LVU's and ACU's progression towards HSI status, this project utilizes historical methods. ACU was chosen because of its presence of Puerto Rican students outside of Puerto Rican, showing the diversity of Latinx subgroups on college campuses. We selected LVU as an example of an institution that was created to serve a majority-minority area

with a large concentration of Latinx residents. One perspective we adopted was that of critical history, a perspective drawing from critical theory and brings to the foreground power relations and how they influence schooling and education, especially equitable access to education (Alridge, 2015). To date, some historical pieces on HSIs (e.g., Calderón et al., 2012) tend to follow a straightforward narrative approach for informational purposes without assuming any specific theoretical frameworks. A historical approach, combined with a critical lens, enables the examination of two institutional histories and how efforts to support and serve Latinx students have been promoted or disrupted.

We use archival documents from each institution related to the development of a Hispanic-Serving identity and how these institutions responded to growing Latinx populations on their campus. We took into account academic programs, spaces dedicated to Latinx students, debates about Latinx student-focused services, and Latinx student organizations. We followed Humphrey's (2008) steps for conducting archival research by identifying sources through online finding aids (e.g., Texas Archival Resources Online) in order to tailor our time in the archives to this study. Documents were gathered through visits to the archives of each institution, online searches through digital archives, and the use of online sources that are salient to the institutions (e.g., digital archives of local newspapers). Among the artifacts we gathered were institutional histories written by students who participated in activism and included in the campus history collections; institutional documents that provided some detail on historical enrollment trends; and university websites and public relations offices' websites. Perhaps the most important sources for us were the student newspapers at LVU and ACU because they provided primary documents that represented the views of the student bodies at the time of certain incidents.

These documents were shared between the researchers and included artifacts such as university press releases, oral histories, pictures, and program records. Individually, timelines of institutional histories and preliminary institutional narratives that focused on the HSI identity were drawn up by the researchers and then shared with each other. The researchers analyzed these histories together to look for commonalities and differences in order to answer the research questions and develop conclusions collaboratively. We looked for specific institutional agents or places where a commitment (or lack of commitment) to Latinx students developed most prominently and how these moments or agents spoke to the development into an HSI

over time. The critical historical approach, combined with the transformative change framework, challenged us to look at policies and practices that changed the fabric of the institution and demonstrated a deep committed to Latinx students that was sustained over time rather than changes that lost momentum and faded out.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. As an archival study, we are limited by the quality and nature of the documents we could locate despite our efforts to be as comprehensive as possible. For example, locating historical enrollment numbers proved difficult at LVU, and official enrollment tallies could only be found going back to 1990. Next, we acknowledge that our analysis could be strengthened with other types of data, particularly oral histories. Considering this is a starting point in contributing a historical dimension to the research on HSIs, we see this as a way to start the scholarly conversation on the history of HSIs and hope that this body of literature will grow out of this project.

Findings

Loma Verde University was authorized in the late 1960s to address the lack of public four-year institutions in the South Texas region. LVU was created to serve a region that was and remains predominantly Latinx. In explaining this Hispanic-Serving identity, the first LVU President stated that the university would place emphasis on the Spanish language and Latinx culture in the curriculum ("[LVU] emphasis," 1970, p. 18-A). Given these stated goals from early on in its history, we examine LVU as an "intentional" HSI, operationalized as an institution created with the specific mission of serving an area of South Texas with a large Latinx population.

Azul City University (ACU) is located in an urban area in the Midwest and boasts an enrollment of approximately 7,000 undergraduate students. While it was not founded as an HSI, it has had this designation for almost 20 years and publically displays this label in places such as its website. The Latinx population constituted about one-third of ACU's student body in Fall 2016 (ACU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2016). This diversity can be credited to the racial makeup of the city, as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans are well-represented in the city. In fact, Mexicans arrived in the Midwest as early as 1915, entering to not only avoid

the Mexican Revolution and Cristero Rebellion (Henderson, 2011), but to find work due to the lax immigration regulations in the United States that exempted Mexicans from quota laws between 1921 and 1924 (Innis-Jiménez, 2013). Similarly, Puerto Ricans went to the Midwest as early as 1946 (Fernández, 2012). By the 1970s, a small but visible Puerto Rican student population emerged at ACU. It was the Puerto Rican student population who would contribute to ACU's development as a "grassroots HSI," or an institution that came to serve Latinx students as a result of student-led resistance and activism.

Loma Verde University

At the time of its creation, the Legislature noted that the city in which LVU is located was "the largest metropolitan area in the state without a state supported four-year college within commuting distance" (HB 42, 1969). Though the university was created to serve the predominantly Latinx region, this intention almost immediately fell by the wayside. Early controversy emerged when the campus was placed in the northwest quadrant of the city, where college-going rates of high school graduates were higher compared to the rest of the city (*San Antonio Light,* 1970, June 4). Low enrollment of Latinx and other minoritized students was attributed to this distance (Walker, 1979).

Latinx students did not enroll in significant numbers until the mid-1980s with a 26.4 percent increase between Fall 1984 and Fall 1988 ([LVU] Enrollment by Ethnic Origin, Fall 1984 to Fall 1988, n.d.), and Latinx enrollment numbers doubled by 1992 (Scott, 1992). Despite this growth, criticisms of the lack of Latinx administrators persisted. A community group known as *Juntos* [Together], comprised of alumni, students, faculty, and other interested parties, drew up a Latinx education agenda for LVU that included changes to curriculum, recruitment practices, and the appointment of Latinx personnel to leadership positions at LVU, especially to the Office of Minority Affairs and International Students (Scott, 1992). A great irony of the early history of LVU is the extent to which it celebrated itself as an institution committed to Latinx students and culture. Its first Graduate Catalog in 1973 stated its commitment to the region and to the influence of Latinx culture across disciplines (Graduate Catalog, 1973), yet representation of Latinx people on campus remained elusive for most of the first ten years of its existence and took time to build.

The struggle to build Hispanic-Serving capacity. Though LVU began with a stated intention of serving Latinx students, it did so in name only. In 1982, a student newspaper article started, "Although a 'For White's [sic] Only' sign has never graced [LVU's] campus, statistically [LVU] has a predominantly white student population" (Hicks, 1982, p. 1). A prominent Latino mathematics professor accused university administrators of deliberately poor recruiting practices focused on Latinx students, stating: "This University has poor visibility in the community. Perhaps that is part of the deliberate plan to keep the University from becoming, in the eyes of certain administrators and some of the professors here, a 'Mexicanized' University" (Hicks, 1992, p. 1). Interestingly, the Latinx student enrollment at the time was 23 percent, just under what would later become the threshold number to qualify for the HSI designation.

A lengthy response to this article and the professor's comments followed filled with point-by-point rebuttals. The author responded that LVU had a much higher percentage of Latinx tenure or tenure-track faculty at 11 percent versus the flagship institution in the state with 1.4 percent (O'Neal, 1983, p. 7). What is perhaps most significant about this letter is some of the casual racism hidden in some of the rebuttals. For instance, O'Neal wrote:

> The question Prof. Berriozabal indirectly asks is: "How can we stop a traditionally Anglo school from discouraging minority enrollment?" A more fitting question would be: "What can be done in the minority communities to instill a greater belief in the value of a college (and, more importantly, a high school) education?"

Essentially the letter's author repeats a discriminatory assumption that has been commonly made about Latinx students and families that they do not value education (Valencia, 2002).

This struggle to reinforce the campus as a university for Latinx students continued into the 1990s. The *Hopwood* decision resulted in the end of race-based admissions in Texas (Long & Tienda, 2008), and comments from a law professor at a nearby institution sparked heated debate at LVU. The professor publicly stated that Latinx students could not compete academically with their white counterparts on more selective campuses (College Press Service, 1997). One presumably Latinx student at LVU submitted a letter to the editor in the campus newspaper argued that the American education system was deeply racist and that he was "fearful that by removing affirmative action instead of modifying it will lead to higher education only being for the rich" (Garcia-Martinez, 1997, p. 10). Debates continued in the newspaper

among White students and students of color, with one student who self-identified themselves as White writing, "Walking through the [LVU] hallways, I have counted dozens of posters advertising scholarships with the bottom line being, 'non-Hispanic Whites need not apply.' If 90 out of 100 scholarships apply only to 'minorities' do these things make all men equal?" (B.N., 1997, p. 10). This debate regarding the *Hopwood* decision and race-based decision-making in higher education in the 1990s mirrored the campus debates in the previous decade in that as Latinx faculty and students tried to affirm practices to boost access to higher education at LVU, a backlash occurred with accusations that Latinx students were demanding "to be granted special privileges over the rest of society" (B.N., 1997, p. 10).

Serving Latinx students through academic programming. One place of strength in LVU's service to Latinx students is through its academic programs. The first graduate programs established at the university were in Bilingual-Bicultural Studies, Teaching English as a Second Language, and a Latinx literature program ([LVU] Graduate Catalog, 1973). Since 1979, LVU offered a Pre-Freshman Engineering Program to encourage the field to middle and high school students (Rodriguez, 2013). Started by a Latinx mathematics professor named Manuel Berriozábal, this program was specifically designed for underrepresented students and by 2013 served approximately 34,000 students (Rodriguez, 2013).

LVU's first doctoral program, approved by the state in 1991, was in biology with an emphasis in neuroscience. A newspaper article covering the doctoral program just ahead of its approval pointed out that out of the 181 students who received doctorates in this field in 1989, only one was Latinx (Hall, 1991a). This program was hard won considering that at virtually the same time, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Latinx-focused civil rights organization, launched a lawsuit against the state of Texas alleging discrimination in higher education access and funding (Hall, 1991b). It was reported that the South Texas border region only held three of the estimated 600 doctoral programs in the state (Hall, 1991b). LULAC ultimately lost their legal case, but the state legislature approved the South Texas/Border Initiative that greatly increased the fiscal appropriations for colleges and universities in South Texas, including LVU (Flack, 2003). As a result, LVU added nineteen doctoral programs in computer science, physics and chemistry, among others, between 1993 and 2005 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, n.d.). Despite its early intentions to embody a Hispanic-Serving identity, this identity took time to build, considering how long it took for Latinx students to

enroll in large numbers at LVU. One of LVU's biggest successes in supporting this identity was in its pursuit of specific academic programs, especially graduate programs in STEM fields.

Azul City University

ACU was established in the mid-nineteenth century as a teacher training institution. Due to the fact that the makeup of the city was mainly White, and as the institution had a regional focus, the university primarily enrolled White students. But as the city population became more Latinx, the university did not recruit or provide the necessary tools and resources to support the success of its increasingly Mexican and Puerto Rican demographic. It became evident that the student body would have to mobilize in order to acquire the proper resources for success.

Student activism. As a student at ACU, Rosa Hernandez strived to help her community by tutoring English around her home in local churches. Recognizing the need to know English to succeed in the U.S. while working with her community, she asked the college's community service coordinator to help her create a language center. With the help of Rosa's fellow classmates, Rosa went on to secure funding from the U.S. Office of Education Funds. The ACU President, in his memoir, stated that the center served two purposes. First, to make the community aware of the university; and second, to "give university students firsthand experiences in working with urban problems" (Sachs, 1987, p. 83). The name of the language center, *Aqui Estoy* (Here I am) was also symbolic, as it recognized not only the new student population that was increasingly entering the university but also the population that surrounded the university. The name also reassured the Latinx students that they were part of the community, just like their White counterparts, and are there to stay.

As well as having a physical place close to campus, *Estoy Aqui* served a critical role in providing the foundation for future college students to the Latinx community. For example, the center stressed the importance of finishing high school (Lienemann & Smith, 1974) by providing high school equivalency classes, which began with ten students (Gaber, 1971). After passing their equivalency exam, two of these students enrolled in their local college to become teachers and gave back to their communities.

Additionally, *Aqui Estoy* made it their duty to develop leaders to take roles within their communities. The majority of Latinx that the center helped were part of the community who worked at factories around the city. After long hours, they would come to learn English for

several hours weekly. As a grassroots effort, *Aqui Estoy* was a first step towards the university taking responsibility for helping the surrounding Latinx community believe college was a possibility for them.

Student mobilization and resistance. Students also created organizations as a way to voice their needs and concerns. The Union for Puerto Rican Students (UPRS) was formed in the summer of 1971 with the intention "to check ourselves to see how we [as Latinxs] can go about the business of not only surviving academically, and socially, but thriving and contributing as well" (Rosario & Rios, 1971, p. 4). The UPRS made three initial contributions that laid the foundation for Latinx students at ACU. First, they made an effort to increase the number of Latinx staff members at the university. Secondly, they recognized that the Latinx student body was small for a city that had such a large Latinx population. Therefore, the UPRS submitted a request for a Latinx student recruitment program. Lastly, to aid the students who were brought in through the recruitment program, the UPRS, along with several professors from various departments, created the English Language Program to aid in the success of college courses. These efforts made by UPRS clearly demonstrate the struggles that Latinx felt on ACU's campus as an invisible, yet growing group. As a result, the group pushed for change as a way to bring the necessary resources for success.

With a predominantly White staff and student population at ACU, the UPRS made it their agenda to acquire a Latinx staff member by approaching the President and requesting a Latinx counselor (Torres, 1994). Consequently, the university President hired its first Latinx counselor in the fall of 1971 who made an impact on the student body at the university by providing guidance to the university's Latinx students. However, the university was not completely committed to supporting this effort, as the counselor's office space was dilapidated: the furniture that filled his room was broken, filthy, and unstable. According to Torres (1994), "It was full of holes, through which the cushion material was clearly visible (p. 8)." As a direct response to the provided office space to the counselor, the UPRS students took the broken furniture to the President's Office and demanded that the furniture be replaced. Through their actions, the UPRS continued to advocate for Latinx students at the university.

The UPRS also developed a recruitment program titled, *Proyecto Pa'lante* [Project Forward]. When UPRS approached the President to ask for such a program, the President responded that the organization should talk to the professor in charge of the African American

recruitment program for help (Torres, 1994). The UPRS replied by saying that they respected and recognized that the African American program was born from its own struggle, and they did not want to take anything away from that program. Additionally, they reiterated their view that the Latinx student community at ACU had their "own specific need of self-determination" (Torres, 1994, p. 7). In the Fall of 1972 "in spirit" the President's administration accepted the Latinx recruitment program proposal and accepted the first 80 *Proyecto Pa'lante* students. This was indeed a major victory for the organization and a step towards the university becoming an HSI.

Although *Proyecto Pa'lante* was initiated, there was still a dire need to support the Latinx students who were not prepared to succeed in higher education, so the UPRS created a retention program that focused on students' writing skills. The English Language Program (ELP) was created with the help of several professors from different departments such as English, Linguistics, and Foreign Languages as an effort to support the incoming students who were struggling with basic writing. This program was critical in that it retained the students from *Proyecto Pa'Lante*, among others, beyond their first semester or year. Before the initial creation of the ELP, there was a lack of full support from the President and one of the leading professors who was helping spearhead this program was fired. Subsequently, 250 students occupied the Dean's office of Arts and Sciences demanding to meet with the President to discuss the creation of the ELP and to rehire the professor that was fired (Torres, 1994). While meeting with the President the UPRS stressed that the ELP offered the opportunity to retain Latinx students on campus and as a result the President "agreed that the idea of an English Language Program was worthy" (Torres, 1994, p. 12).

University efforts to dismantle the UPRS. Although the UPRS had several successes, there were also efforts to dismantle their cause. The ACU administration's attempt in dismantling the UPRS came in the form of hiring two different Latino males in positions of power who were ineffective in their roles and caused tension between members of UPRS. The first Latino was the director of an organization that catered to the needs of Latinx students and also served as a Special Assistant to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The new director was not effective in setting up programs or meeting deadline dates that he promised; in fact, he exploited his position by campaigning as an aldermanic candidate as well as enrolled as a full-time law student at a university in the city (Kosinski, 1975a). He displayed a lack of dedication

to the Latinx student population at ACU he was hired to serve, and the UPRS responded by hosting a sit-in in the President's office and called for the director's removal.

The second Latino hired at ACU was the Vice President for Academic Affairs. According to the President of the UPRS, "the movements were underway among the administration with the help of faculty members once favorable to the Union to appoint a Puerto Rican administrator to pacify the militant Puerto Rican population of the university and avoid confrontations which have occurred in the past" (Kosinski, 1975b, p. 1). The tensions that arose between this Vice President and the UPRS came from the threats that the Vice President made. In addition to threatening to expel the UPRS student president, the Vice President allegedly told him, "I will not tolerate what the ACU administration has in the past from the [UPRS]. I am not bullshitting with you. If I can't control the Union, I will destroy it" (Kosinski, 1975c, p.1 & 3). Despite these claims made by the president of the UPRS, the Vice President did indeed take actions to dismantle the UPRS, including taking away the facilities that the organization used. Again, the UPRS demonstrated their concern by occupying the ACU President's office and demanding their space to be returned. After three hours of occupation by the UPRS, the President came up with a solution to temporarily provide the UPRS an area until the end of the semester. The president of UPRS claimed that their success was due to the joint efforts of the UPRS and the university arm of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party.

Next, the ACU administration also attempted to destroy the UPRS from within. UPRS President Gutierrez says "that Camacho [a former UPRS student who was expelled due to an infraction] is only a tool of a racist administration which sought to pit 'students against students, Puerto Ricans against Puerto Ricans with regards to controversial matters such as the selection of an executive director for the CLASES Institute" (Kosinski, 1975d, p. 1). The President of the university strategically used the student Camacho as a way to split the UPRS. For example, after Camacho left UPRS, he attempted to create his own organization which would "deal with specific problems of the Latinos with regards to education and culture including financial aid. The new organization would be non-political and not in opposition to the union but an alternative" (Kosinski, 1975d, p. 2).

Historically looking at the way ACU has improved the services to its Latinx student population, the resources would have not been available if not for the grassroots efforts of the UPRS and other students (e.g., Rosa). Indeed, these resources have historically aided the Latinx

student population for several decades. More recently, ACU has taken up the task of helping the undocumented population by putting forth the undocumented student project, which provides help in applying for financial aid as well as hosting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) application workshops. In addition to the continuation of these specific resources, other support systems have been created to cater not only to the Latinx student population but also to the undocumented, women, Asian, Black, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and ally student body.

The resources attained by the efforts of the Latinx students' activism at ACU during the 60's and 70's are still present for current Latinx students at ACU, despite efforts by administration to dismantle the UPRS. Moreover, each of the gains made by the UPRS have improved the lives of the students who attend ACU. In fact, the center *Aqui Estoy* has expanded not only in size but in providing classes for students at ACU as well as the surrounding neighborhood as it has done in the past. After only seven years in service to the Latinx community, the storefront *Aqui Estoy* was quickly transformed—with a different name—as a satellite extension of ACU offering not only an academic program with college credits for the community and incoming students but also a full-time staff. Underscoring the lasting impact of *Aqui Estoy*, in the late 2000's the center enrolled more than 1000 students. Because enrollment is critical to serving the Latinx community, *Proyecto Pa'lante* is still ongoing with the same efforts to recruit and admit students.

Discussion

As previous noted, the HSI designation has been criticized as a "manufactured identity" (Contreras et al., 2008). In both LVU and ACU, however, we observed an organic progression of the HSI identity into what we call "intentional" and "grassroots" HSIs. LVU was "intentional" in that its creation specifically centered on serving a predominantly Latinx-populated region. However, Latinx students did not enroll at LVU in larger numbers for a decade and a half, and despite its presence as an HSI, debates about Latinx access and representation on its campus raged on at various points in its history. ACU is a "grassroots HSI" in that the struggle for Latinx representation, especially in student services and space, was student-led. The resulting programs like *Aqui Estoy* impacted not only students on campus but the local Latinx community. As noted by Núñez and Elizondo (2015), there is a large degree of variation in four-year HSIs

because of their individual local contexts. In considering the history and development of HSIs as a collective body, researchers should take note that HSIs are at once local and collective spaces. In challenging this notion of HSIs as a "manufactured identity," researchers should look at ways that Hispanic-serving practices are absorbed into an institutional mission and identity and how the presence of Latinx students, faculty, and staff transform the space.

The key events of action and resistance in the history of these two HSIs reveals several common threads in observing transformational change in developing a HSI identity: Latinx students, faculty, and organized groups encountered resistance when trying to create or reinforce a Hispanic-Serving identity, and these two institutions have provided different types of access and advocacy for Latinx students. Among the highly contextualized factors of these universities are the students themselves: LVU serves a predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American population while the thrust of influence behind ACU's development into an HSI came from its Puerto Rican population. The area of South Texas where LVU is located has historically had a large Latinx population since its establishment centuries ago, given its proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border. Therefore, English as a Second Language programs were not just about teaching non-native students to speak English but about preparing future teachers for the region.

ACU's early history and location in the Midwest does not indicate it was meant to be an HSI. Since the 1970s, ACU students pushed for academic and social programs for Latinx students to promote their long-term retention and success. These efforts prompted the creation of physical spaces and dedicated staff positions to work with this specific student population that are still operating. When students' efforts met resistance or deflection, the UPRS did not hesitate to take their concerns and grievances directly to the ACU President. The transformational change in their efforts to embed programs and practices that serve the Latinx student population, was largely the work of students and the handful of administrators who supported them.

In contrast, LVU's main successes in serving Latinx students was in establishing academic programs, especially graduate programs, in areas where Latinx graduates have been historically underserved nationally including STEM fields. The Pre-Freshman Engineering Program, aimed at boosting minority students' interests in these fields from a young age, began at LVU and later expanded to other institutions around the city, state, and beyond. What is also notable for LVU

is its role in providing access to Latinx students in times where diversity and affirmative action-based admissions policies prompted fierce debate about the capabilities of Latinx students and their representation in institutions of higher education, especially four-year universities. At LVU, it is worth noting that faculty played a key role in advocating for better access and representation of Latinx faculty and students, whereas at ACU the efforts were student-led.

There are two important points that should not be lost. First, the push to improve the access and quality of academic and student programs on both campuses began as early as the 1970s, demonstrating that at least two institutions strove for a Hispanic-Serving identity prior to the creation of a federal designation (though Calderón Galdeano et al., 2012 proves there were many more in addition to LVU and ACU). Second, they highlight the power of individuals and small groups to enact meaningful change on their campuses in service to Latinx students. One mathematics professor at LVU started a program in the 1980s to promote Latinx participation in engineering while Puerto Rican students at ACU in the 1970s fought for physical spaces; the fruits of these efforts persist today.

Conclusions and Implications

In trying to gauge how HSIs engage their HSI identity, a well-documented challenge within the HSI literature (Contreras et al., 2008), we argue that researchers should look at the local history and context of the respective institution's location and how the institution and/or its students have responded. If HSI identity is in fact a "manufactured identity," we would assume that responses to Latinx students would be quite generic and similar. However, in the case of these two HSI, the responses differed greatly. The change brought about at ACU in the 1970s was due to a small number of students, so perhaps having a large student population on a campus is not as important as the actions of the collective, regardless of size. As a result, a small group of students were able to push for spaces and programs that eventually became a permanent part of the school's structure, which gave way to an increased enrollment of Latinx students and, eventually, the HSI designation.

As HSIs develop their capacity to serve Latinx students, it is also crucial to maintain awareness about how transformational change occurs in organizations. Hurtado and Alvarado Ruiz (2015) point out that short-term programs and interventions often come and go. The Pre-Freshman Engineering Program at LVU is a better example of a program that has made

meaningful impact given its longevity and the high number of students it has impacted over the last nearly four decades. A historical perspective of successes and failures offers a chance for researchers, policy makers, and administrators to see what has worked at other institutions with success and what programs may require further planning or funding prior to implementation that would boost long-term sustainability.

While the body of research on HSIs is still rapidly expanding, this historical perspective takes stock of the place of HSIs before 1992 when the federal category was created. This perspective does not generate a set of common denominators for the change processes that institutions undergo in becoming HSIs, at least not in the two institutions in this study. However, there are some similarities the development of LVU and ACU both demonstrate a need to look inward at the campus and outward at the community to determine what Latinx students need. It shows that resistance is likely, but sustained activism can lead to transformative change. These campuses also show that efforts to create a Hispanic-Serving identity cannot be done by one lone person; instead, it requires cooperation and collaboration.

The Latinx struggle for access, representation, and student support services in higher education is not limited to predominantly White institutions, and it is important to understand that HSIs are not immune to these struggles by virtue of this designation. As scholars and administrators engage in work that sets out to better define what it is meant to be an HSI, the histories of LVU and ACU indicate that this designation is one that is developed over time and is not without controversy, even in majority-minority contexts like the surrounding area of LVU. As such, this study offers a first look at these organizational processes at two HSIs with a historical perspective. Given the current political climate of the United States, the past challenges of LVU and ACU could be instructive to newer or aspiring HSIs who want to invest in the success of Latinx students.

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