



Tocayo Epistemology for Latino Males in Education

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■ The purpose of this paper is to share the lived experiences of and give meaning, understanding and knowledge to a *tocayo* epistemology. The term *tocayo* is used to identify people who share the same name. In this paper, the authors are *tocayos* and use epistemology as a way of understanding their lived experiences and knowing the world and making sense of how they know what they know. *Tocayo* is about the names but more about connection and similar lived experiences and oppressions.

LATINO FACULTY MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES IN EDUCATION

The number of Latina/o/x faculty members reflects neither the size of Latina/o/x communities in the United States, nor the student population in higher education institutions (Salinas, 2015b). Data shows that Latina/o/x faculty members are significantly underrepresented compared to other racial and ethnic groups in postsecondary institutions and settings (Rodríguez et al., 2015; Valle & Salinas, 2018). Therefore, it is important to document the struggles and opportunities of Latina/o/x faculty members and scholars in academic spaces to support their promotion and tenure, their recruitment and retention, and the overall success of upcoming generations (Salinas, 2015b).

EPISTEMOLOGY

To continue learning and producing research, the authors find it necessary to engage in discussions about the definition and significance of epistemology. Many epistemological viewpoints posit that there is only one method through which to know, understand and explain the world (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002).

The predominant epistemologies in education research have failed to deliver knowledge and learning for Latino males. The lack of epistemologies that are relevant for Latino males in public discussions, education, culture, society and in our lives means that we have to use *testimonios* as a primary source of

guidance and direction to create our own forms of epistemologies. Therefore, the authors of this paper expand on the definition of epistemology as a modern way of (re)claiming knowledge, as it aims for the truth, reality, objectivity, and justification of knowledge, to better understand their own experiences within our Mestizaje diaspora across both the Latino and Chicano worlds.

THE HISTORICAL NATURE OF THE TERM TOCAYO

In this paper, the word *tocayo* is used as a form of epistemology to expand on the *testimonios* of two Latino/Chicano scholars in education. *Tocayo* originated from the Latin language and culture, as a form of women taking their husbands' names (Corominas, 1993). *Tocayo* is only used in the Spanish language; it has no counterparts among the other six roman languages. Anitúa (2003) argued that the term *tocayo* originated from Náhuatl, an Aztec language that was mostly spoken in Mexico (León-Portillo, 2006). In his work, Chavero (1886) maintained that *tocayo*, or "tocaitl" and "teto-cayotiloni," was used to refer to people that had the same name. Nowadays, *tocayo* is still primarily used in Mexico and within Mexican communities across the world to identify a person who shares your first name.

TESTIMONIOS AS A METHOD

The effort to prepare, recruit, and support Latino male faculty members into and through the professoriate is a critical component to supporting Latino communities. However, preparing and recruiting Latino faculty is by no means that simple. Therefore, to better understand the lived experiences of Latino faculty through *tocayo* epistemology, the authors use *Testimonio* (Beverly, 2004; Brabeck, 2003; Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Flores Carmona, 2012; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) as an strategy of inquiry that provides an opportunity to further examine, reflect, and theorize about experiences related to the preparation,

recruitment, and support of more Latino scholars in the professoriate.

In this study, *testimonios* are used as a form of data collection and story sharing (Flores Carmona, 2012). Therefore, the authors of this paper use their *testimonios* as data and to share their lived experiences while navigating the predominantly White world of academia. Through the process of sharing their *testimonios*, the authors discussed crucial issues and views on relationships to oppression and privilege with each other, to understand their connection with each other and the world.

CONSCIOUSNESS OF TOCAYOS

The idea of sharing their *testimonios* through a *tocayo* epistemology becomes part of not just a conversation, but a reflection of scholarship and a form of liberation. The authors of this paper have consciously engaged in private and public conversations (Salinas & Beatty, 2013) and writing to theorize the use of *tocayo* epistemology. They have deconstructed their social identities, and various intersectional forms of privilege, power, oppression, and marginalization as Latino faculty members in higher education. Similar to Patel's (2016) feelings of responsibility, the authors of this paper share their *testimonios* to reveal that while they have the "responsibility to understand, contribute to, and be fluent in existing research, [they] also are responsible for [their] ontological entry-points and impacts as researchers" (p. 57).

TOCAYO REFLECTION

In their *testimonios*, the authors recognized that their bond began instantly when Cristóbal R. said "*tocayo*" to Cristóbal S. This was the beginning of creating a better understanding of what it means to be a Cristóbal and a *tocayo*. They realized that they have more in common than just a name. They get frustrated because individuals cannot pronounce their first name correctly. They are each the youngest

of three children, both completed a Ph.D. program in three years, are members of Latino fraternities, and both danced *ballet folklórico*. They are Latino/Chicano faculty members at minority- serving institutions. They share similar brown skin color, identify and celebrate aspects of their rich Mexican roots, and speak the same languages, including English, Spanish, Spanglish, and academia.

Using *tocayo* as a form of epistemology promotes a constant reflection of the lived experiences, and interactions with people. *Tocayo* epistemology also promotes making connection and interacting with others based on names, race/ethnicity, language, nationality, age, immigration status, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and other social identities. Through the *testimonios* of the authors, it has been shown that *tocayo* epistemology can construct various ways of knowing and that it can promote self-reflection. *Tocayo* epistemology occurs as an evolving conversation through oral and written narratives and stories that create meaning and knowledge for Latino communities.

Using the notion of *tocayo* as a new form of epistemology reinforces Latinos as “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 106). Similar to the idea of *tú eres mi otro yo* [you are my other me], *tocayo* epistemology calls us to embrace the reality that we are one.

A TOCAYO EPISTEMOLOGY

Creswell (2013) explained a phenomenological study as “describing what participants [in a study] have in common as they experience a phenomenon” (p. 76). *Tocayo* epistemology can also be used with a phenomenological approach to understand, investigate, and share individuals’ lived experience

of a particular phenomenon.

When exercising *tocayo* epistemology, having two or more participants with the same name in order to understand the phenomena of *tocayo* helps facilitate that connection. The authors of this paper further argue that two or more people can have a *tocayo* epistemology to establish a connection of solidarity, understanding, truth, and reality even when their names are different if they share similar cultural or experiential origins. *Tocayo* epistemology can also be applied to pedagogy inside and outside the classroom to build relationships among students and to improve student-faculty interactions.

Through the *tocayo* epistemology process participants should connect and create knowledge with an understanding of pain and pride in a social and political context. Historically and culturally Latina/o/x parents take similar approaches to adopting names for children using saints, or even deities, such as Jesus or Guadalupe, to invoke spiritual connections and behavior in people.

TOCAYO EPISTEMOLOGY AS A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON CONSCIOUSNESS

The authors of this paper did not intend to construct the *tocayo* epistemology as a new perspective for Latino males in education. Through the analysis of their shared *testimonios*, they began to make sense of their similar lived experiences and *testimonios* to create new *tocayo* epistemology. In her book, Anzaldúa (1990), reinforces the idea that we must create “our own approaches and methodologies” (p. xxv) to transform theory and the spaces we occupy. This new form of

epistemology as *tocayo* can be used by researchers, practitioners, educators, activists and students trying to promote and understand the lived experiences of Latinos in education and beyond. *Tocayo* epistemology is a unique way of knowing and understanding various experiences of two or more people who share a name, last name, race/ethnicity, skin color, language, accent, nationality, age, immigration status, gender, faith, and sexual orientation, and other social identity.

Similar to LatCrit, *tocayo* epistemology is rooted in and “concerned with a progressive sense of coalitional Latina/Latino [Latinx] pan-ethnicity” (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 108). *Tocayo* epistemology constructs knowledge, and is a form of empowerment to self-disclose with others that share similar experiences. It also promotes constant reflection on lived experiences, creates the opportunity to form long lasting relationships with communities of people, and attempts to connect theory to practice.

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