

Community Cultural Wealth & Funds of Knowledge at the Center of Advisement

Nicholas Hudson, Ed.D. | Texas A&M International University | @drnhudson

“It is important to understand that the system of advantage is perpetuated when we do not acknowledge its existence” – Beverly Daniel Tatum, “Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria”

As an influx of students of color continues to enter higher education institutions and join NPHC and Multicultural Greek organizations, the existing support structures have failed to keep pace and meet the emerging needs of this demographic. This holds especially true for offices designated specifically for advising sororities and fraternities on campuses. Beverly Daniel Tatum’s quote should deeply resonate with us as professionals, as we have not systemically acknowledged our Panhellenic and Interfraternity Council chapters have a structural advantage in our advising structures, training, and general-knowledge base that our NPHC and Multicultural Greek chapters do not benefit from overall. While the current advising structures have been in place for an extended period of time, they have been geared towards the advisement of Panhellenic and IFC chapters, not Multicultural and NPHC chapters. Our field and our universities have failed to provide adequate resources and personnel to best support our NPHC and Multicultural Greek communities, with few exceptions across the country. When support and resources are provided, it is often an after-thought. Well-intentioned graduate students and new professionals are often advising these communities with limited understanding of the specific nuances of working with and for this community, often failing to recognize inherent resources members of these organizations and the organizations themselves have at their disposal. Sorority/fraternity professionals should centralize these resources, or capital, as individual and collective agency tools that can benefit the entire community.

Most practitioners are familiar with cultural and social capital, as research has demonstrated that society prioritizes these within the educational system. Cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) is the accumulation of knowledge, behaviors, and skills one can tap into to demonstrate one's cultural competence, and thus one's social status or standing in society. Social capital refers to the networks of people and community resources available to individuals to obtain benefits at a later time. Cultural capital can be “used broadly in an attempt to understand societal inequities and, specifically, inequities in educational outcomes. Cultural capital is used to address a) various cultural forms, competencies, and knowledge that certain individuals possess and b) the system perpetuation of power and privilege” (Kiyama, 2010, p. 335). These two forms of capital prioritize upper and middle class cultures and continue to buttress existing systems and structures of power, privilege, and oppression. While most



practitioners recognize these two forms of capital, students of color have additional resources that must be prioritized.

Two resources in particular that members of NPHC and Multicultural Greek organizations have at their disposal are their **community cultural wealth** and **funds of knowledge**. Higher education professionals often centralize their own lived experiences and cultural capital, thereby neglecting to acknowledge the unique lived histories and experiences of these students and their families. Cultural capital is an important construct to understand power, privilege, and social mobility; yet, it is often applied in ways that frame communities of color and other minoritized¹ populations as deficient and that obscure forms of capital which are produced and employed in ways that promote persistence and mobility. Rather than operating from a deficit narrative that has long plagued our field, we instead must celebrate, foster, and assist in the conversion of these capital to the benefit of these organizations and their members. As sorority/fraternity professionals advising NPHC and Multicultural Greek organizations, we must centralize students' community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge as the core of our advisement techniques. The following article explains these two resources and ends by offering suggestions on how sorority/fraternity professionals can tap into these resources in their advisement of NPHC and Multicultural Greek Communities.

Community Cultural Wealth

In response to Bourdieu's cultural capital theory that privileges the knowledge of upper and middle classes as valuable to a hierarchical society, Tara Yosso (2005) created an alternative theory entitled community cultural wealth. Community cultural wealth outlines at least six forms of capital that often go unnoticed or unrecognized as assets to students of color in their schooling. Figure 1 outlines the interconnectedness of this theory.

According to Yosso (2005), the six forms of capital of community cultural wealth are

- (1) *Aspirational capital*: ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real and perceived barriers;
- (2) *Linguistic capital*: skills learned through language and the ability to communicate through visual art, music, and poetry;
- (3) *Familial capital*: the forms of knowledge nurtured among family that "carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition" (p. 79);

¹ The term minoritized populations refers to a people who have been ascribed the characteristics of a minority (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). To be minoritized, one need not be in the minority, but only treated as if one's position and perspective are less worth. Minoritized populations tend to be silenced, marginalized, or excluded.

- (4) *Social capital*: the “networks of people and community resources” (p. 79) that can help students navigate through social institutions;
- (5) *Navigational capital*: a form of capital inclusive of social networks and the resiliency students develop to persist through institutional barriers;
- (6) *Resistant capital*: “those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (p. 80) guided by a motivation to transform oppressive institutions and structures.

Figure 1- A Model of Community Cultural Wealth. Adopted from Yosso (2005)



These six forms of capital are dynamic processes that build upon each other to form community cultural wealth that students of color bring with them into the classroom and are equally as valuable as cultural capital as described by Bourdieu. By centralizing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of people of color as a valuable asset, community cultural wealth shifts the existing narrative that only middle class cultures are valuable. Members of NPHC and Multicultural Greek chapters have an abundance of cultural capital wealth as resources they utilize to navigate through the structures they encounter in the pursuit of their educational goals at institutions of higher education. Community cultural wealth is often ascribed to people of color and would, therefore, be applicable to people of color in NPC and NIC organizations.

Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain dreams and have high expectations for the future, regardless of the real and perceived structural barriers families may face. Even though students of color have historically had lower educational outcomes compared to whites,

students' of color parents have consistently maintained high aspirations and expectations for their students. This continues with students having high aspirations to fulfill those dreams and ensure their parents' sacrifices do not go unfulfilled. These communal set of values demonstrate their desires to build their capacity for the future and ensure future generations have it better than the previous one.

Linguistic capital is the intellectual and social skills one obtains through communication experiences in more than one language. Students of color arrive at an educational facility with multiple language and communication skills, including participating in storytelling. Linguistic capital also includes various forms of communication, including film, music, social media, and translation. Students of color have an abundance of linguistic capital at their fingertips to navigate through structural barriers they encountered.

Nurtured among family, familial capital refers to cultural knowledge that carries a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. The concept of family is extended to include those outside of the traditional nuclear family, thereby resulting in the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to the community and the various resources it has available. Familial capital informs the emotional, moral, educational, and occupational awareness of the individual and community. Funds of knowledge are often referred to as familial capital; however, familial capital refers to more than the knowledge they have in the household. Familial capital is an idea of community engagement and support.

Social capital refers to the community and networks of people who provide instrumental and emotional support, similar to familial capital. Students of color have various networks of support, including family, friends, mentors, sponsors, other students of color, and alumni they can rely on. Registered student organizations are another form of social capital they can tap into. These networks and organizations serve as a resource for these students as they navigated through the obstacles they encounter.

Navigational capital refers to the abilities of individuals to maneuver through social institutions that have not been created for minoritized populations. Navigational capital also refers to the resilience, or "a set of inner resources, social competencies, and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning" (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2000, p. 229). Researchers often refer to these as "critical navigational skills," which enable an individual to persist and navigate through inequitable structures seeped in racism and nativism.

Navigational capital acknowledges and celebrates individual agency that empower individuals to rely on their social networks and knowledge of the system to maneuver through the system itself (Yosso, 2005). The students' resilience and persistence to navigate through is a direct result of their utilization of available resources to help them bend the structures at play.

Resistant capital refers to oppositional behaviors that challenge inequality and inequity, and is demonstrated through students' espoused values of equality and independence as well as their activist actions. Students utilize transformative resistance capital as they attempt to transform the oppressive structures they encounter through indirect and direct activism. The methods they utilize in their transformative resistant capital are learned from others in their social network; however, the ideals and motivation behind their activism are similar to countless individuals who have come before in the fight for equality.

Funds of Knowledge

Another available resource is funds of knowledge that students of color learn from their families and their own social groups. Funds of knowledge refer to the

“historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being. It broadly encompasses language practices, social practices, and various other bodies of knowledge found within home cultures and influenced by life experiences” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133).

Funds of knowledge can include families' knowledge and skills regarding animal husbandry, agriculture, business, construction, economics, household management, medicine, religion, and repair. Yosso (2005) places funds of knowledge within the familial capital one has available. Funds of knowledge have historically not been valued by educational institutions and actors; yet, they have a profound impact on the successful navigation and persistence at higher education institutions if they are recognized and valued by institutional actors (Hudson, 2017; Kiyama, 2010, 2011).

Funds of knowledge lead to increased educational aspirations and ideologies in students of color (Kiyama, 2011). Funds of knowledge present in Mexican-American homes facilitate a college-going culture in Mexican-American homes. Funds of knowledge can play an integral role in college transition models and educational/occupational aspirations (Kiyama, 2011). Families set high academic expectations for their children, as they understand education leads to future success. Parents instill values of hard work, respect, pride, and faith as resources to achieve

success. Students employ their funds of knowledge in their identity development (Esteban-Guitary & Moll, 2014). Finally, funds of knowledge can also be converted into cultural and social capital if favorable conditions are met.

Funds of knowledge can be converted (if they are valued and recognized) into two forms of capital: social and cultural. As NPHC and Multicultural Greek members promote their own agency to create individualized routes to success, they can convert their funds of knowledge into these forms of capital to be utilized as they achieve their educational aspirations. Cultural capital can be converted into economic and educational gains while social capital can be converted into economic and institutional gains.

Utilizing CCW and Funds of Knowledge in Advisement

Students of color inherently have valuable resources when they arrive at our institutions. If they choose to join NPHC and Multicultural Greek organizations, those resources cannot only benefit the organizations, but also the community. It is incumbent on us as practitioners to understand these resources, recognize them, and help our students utilize these resources for the betterment of their organizations and the community. Tapping into these resources allows the lived experiences of students of color to be prioritized and recognized as an asset. The following are some suggestions on how to utilize community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge in our advisement of students of color in our fraternity/sorority communities.

As a general rule, one should get to know the lived histories and stories of your students of color. This will go a long way in building relationships. This demonstrates a deep commitment to the success of the student and centralizes their experiences. When first meeting with a student, have them share their story as to how they got to today. This personal story can often elucidate their community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge that you can tap into. Listen intently to the student and make sure you keep notes of your conversation. This will allow you to remember what was said when you meet with them in the future. You should also share your own story as this builds trust and can strengthen the relationship. After the initial meeting, operate from the P.I.T. model of advising, as it works best to strengthen this deep relationship.

The following are some suggestions as to incorporate CCW and Funds of Knowledge in your advisement:

- (1) Ask students what their educational goals are and why they are in school. Acknowledge the lived histories of the students and the hopes and dreams of parents.
- (2) Celebrate student and organizational success.

- (3) Remove institutional barriers, such as unnecessary red tape, within your area so students and organizations can thrive. Work within the existing structures to find ways around those barriers to provide students with an equitable opportunity.
- (4) Help students make connections on how the students' experience in fraternity/sorority life will help them achieve aspirational goals.
- (5) Utilize the students' language skills by having them translate recruitment materials into their native tongue as a way to connect with the family.
- (6) Engage with the family of the students during family weekend. Acknowledge that a family does not necessarily incorporate the traditional nuclear family.
- (7) Recognize existing social networks and assist students in developing additional networks while on campus, including student organizations, faculty, and staff.
- (8) Support students' resistance to structural inequities they see on campus and in the world by listening and showing up.
- (9) Encourage students' entrepreneurial behaviors, including their fundraising efforts through financial support.

If you are able to recognize that students of color inherently have varying resources available to them and operate from a place of individual and collective agency, you are working with and for your students. This will go a long way in building sustainable NPHC and Multicultural Greek communities and supporting individual student success.

--

Dr. Nicholas Hudson serves as the Director of the Office of Student Orientation, Leadership and Engagement at Texas A&M International University. TAMIU is a Hispanic Serving Institution with 96% of students identifying as Hispanic/Latino. Dr. Hudson serves as the Greek Advisor for TAMIU, which is made up of only Multicultural Greek Organizations. Prior to working at TAMIU, Dr. Hudson served as an Assistant Director at Washington State University, working primarily with Multicultural Greek Organizations. Dr. Hudson received both his Masters in Legislative Affairs and his doctorate in Higher Education Administration from George Washington University. His research focuses on undocumented Latinx student activists and their funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth. He has presented nationally on supporting and strengthening Multicultural Greek Communities, undocumented Latinx student activists, and Latinx student leadership. Dr. Hudson joined his fraternity Delta Sigma Phi at the University of Oregon. He lives in Laredo, TX with his partner Christine and daughter Cecilia.

References

- Bourdieu, P. & Passeron, J.C. (1977). *Reproduction n Education, Society and Culture*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Esteban-Guitart, M. & Moll, L. C. (2014). Funds of identity: A new concept based on the funds of knowledge approach. *Culture & Psychology, 20*(1), 31-48. doi: 10.1177/1354067X13515934.
- Hudson, N. (2017). *Undocumented Latino Student Activists' Funds of Knowledge: Transforming Social Movements*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from ERIC. (ED578450).
- Kiyama, J. M. (2010). College aspirations and limitations: The role of educational ideologies and funds of knowledge in Mexican American families. *American Educational Research Journal, 47*(2), 330-356. doi:10.3102/0002831209357468.
- Kiyama, J. M. (2011). Family lessons and funds of knowledge: College-going paths in Mexican American families. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 10*(1), 23-42. doi: 10.1080/15348431.2011.531656.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141. Accessed by: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476399>.
- Shields, C.M., Bishop, R. & Mazawi, A.E. (2005). *Pathologising practices. The impact of deficit thinking on education*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. (2011). A social capital framework for the study of institutional agents and their role in the empowerment of low-status students and youth. *Youth & Society, 43*(3), 1066-1109. doi: 10.1177/0044118X0382877.
- Tatum, B.D. (2003). *Why are all of the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69-91. doi: 10.1080/1361332052000341006.