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PA 'LANTE! TOWARD THE PRESIDENCY: UNDERSTANDING FACTORS THAT
FACILITATE LATINO LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation Presented

by

GLORIA LOPEZ

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts, Boston
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

June 2014

Higher Education Administration

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Approved as to style and content by:

Tara Parker, Associate Professor
Chairperson of Committee

Katalin Szelényi, Assistant Professor
Member, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Lorna Rivera, Associate Professor
Member, University of Massachusetts, Boston

Tara Parker, Program Director
Higher Education Administration Program

WenFan Yan, Chairperson
Department of Leadership in Education

ABSTRACT

PA 'LANTE! TOWARD THE PRESIDENCY: UNDERSTANDING FACTORS THAT FACILITATE LATINO LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

June 2014

Gloria Lopez, B.A., Dartmouth College
M.S.W., Boston University
Ed.D., University of Massachusetts Boston

Directed by Professor Tara L. Parker

The purpose of my study was to explore the role of cultural values in the lived experiences of Latino college and university presidents at four-year higher education institutions and to determine how cultural values contributed to and reflected their professional strengths. Using the Community Cultural Wealth framework developed by Tara Yosso (2005) to capture the assets or forms of capital that people of color bring with them to all settings, this study utilized a strengths-based approach to examine the ways in which Latino higher education executives translated their cultural upbringing and values into skills and approaches that facilitated their ascension in the field of higher education.

In semi-structured conversational interviews with 14 of the 21 identified four-year Latino college presidents, I explored a). the factors that facilitated Latino college presidents' success, b). the ways in which presidents used their cultural background and cultural values to ascend to leadership roles, and c). how their cultural backgrounds guided their approaches to and view of their role in higher education.

I conducted a qualitative study using testimonio, a form of narrative inquiry that began in Latin American studies as a way to expose the experiences and injustices endured by oppressed groups. Through testimonios marginalized individuals tell of their lived experiences to raise awareness of racism, classism or other forms of oppression and to also effect change. Testimonio and critical race theory are also based on individual narratives representing the collective experience of communities. Since this study looked at how Latino college presidents viewed the role of their cultural backgrounds in their careers, testimonios allowed me to capture the commonalities of those experiences.

This study adds to the literature by using the Community Cultural Wealth model and an assets-based approach to examine different cultural aspects or forms of capital of Latino college presidents and the role of these cultural elements in their ascent to a presidency. This study uncovered the extent to which culture has been a positive force and inspiration in the professional careers of Latino college presidents.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my *familia*, those who have supported, taught and strengthened me on my journey.

To my parents, Esmeralda Cruz López and Jose Angel Cintròn your incredible resilience and commitment to family have not only shaped how I love and appreciate my *familia*, but it has also inspired my unwavering commitment to social justice.

To my siblings, each of you has provided me with strengths that I carry with me each day. Rosa, your unconditional love of everyone makes me want to be a better person every day. Ramon, your unshakable spirit helps me see my glass half full. Isabel your quiet presence reflects for me the power of listening. Benny, your sense of humor reminds me of the value of living a smile. Miguel, your support motivated me to do more. Juanita your resilience and college graduation inspire me. Ricardo your friendship and wisdom have been a comforting and guiding presence.

To my partner and best friend, Tammi, your love, support and presence each day provide me with the strength and smiles to truly appreciate being here while also looking forward to what else is possible.

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A significant part of my *familia* and the forces that inspired me to move in the direction of this topic and to truly appreciate our community includes friends and colleagues, faculty and mentors.

To Althea, I am so glad that our paths crossed and that we had the conversation about the importance of women of color to remain true to themselves. Our conversation and the book that you shared with me awakened the Latina warrior in me to make my dissertation a more personal and cultural journey. I cannot thank you enough.

To my committee, Dr. Lorna Rivera, Dr. Katalin Szelényi, and Dr. Tara L. Parker, I so appreciated your support and guidance throughout this process. To my chair, Dr. Tara L. Parker, thank you for believing in me and for challenging me to be a better scholar throughout this journey.

To the faculty at University of Massachusetts Boston, I speak highly of all of you for the incredible quality of your commitment to the field of higher education and to students in the program.

To one of my mentors, Chancellor J. Keith Motley, your leadership and support has been a model of strength, presence and knowing of the value of community. Thank you.

To the 14 presidents who gave of their time and their hearts and shared their powerful experiences with me, thank you for your leadership and courage and for helping to illustrate the beauty that is growing up in a Latino family.

To my former institution North Shore Community College and my former supervisor, Laura Ventimiglia, I would like to express my gratitude for your support and for allowing my doctoral journey to begin during my time there.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As a Latina freshman student at Dartmouth College in 1988, I was part of the approximately 1% of Latino students on campus. I remember thinking there were only 10 other Latinos who were a part of the Class of 1992. My Latino community in Lawrence, Massachusetts seemed further away than the 2 hour drive to campus. Unfortunately, the lack of a critical mass of Latino peers was magnified by the absence of Latinos in leadership roles. I did not meet staff members, advisors, faculty, or administrators who shared my background. There was no recognition of my cultural background as something that could be included or celebrated in my college experience. In retrospect, it was no wonder that although I appreciated the incredible resources and opportunities that Dartmouth offered me, I did not see myself working in higher education or feeling comfortable on a college campus—ever. The experience did not expose me to role models or mentors with my background who could encourage or inspire me to see myself at home in academia. Thirteen years later, after a successful career in nonprofit organizations and a particularly rewarding role in supporting diversity work of colleges and universities, I decided to pursue a career in higher education.

Once I started working at a community college, I began to recognize that my new work environment was a challenging adjustment. There were very few Latino administrators, and there seemed to be no space for me to explore what it meant to be a Latina administrator at a college. I was surprised, that many years after graduating from Dartmouth, I was once again facing a lonely higher education environment that somehow had continued to keep my community out of leadership roles and did not reflect policies informed by cultural backgrounds like mine. When my institution completed an inventory of the cultural diversity of staff members, I was appalled that the highest representation of Latinos was among custodial-staff members. I had entered the field of higher education with high expectations about how inclusive and equitable decision making would be, and could not believe that structures were not in place to support the advancement of all staff members. I wondered why there were not more people of color in leadership roles at my institution or other institutions. With my own aspirations to become a college president, I was dismayed that not many of us had “made it” to this position. From my experiences in higher education, it became clear to me that presidential roles are critical to making diversity and inclusiveness not only a priority, but also a reality. I concluded that the higher education community had not leveraged the strengths and experiences of existing Latino administrators or presidents in effecting what I thought to be much needed change.

Despite an increasingly diverse college-student population in the United States, racial/ethnic diversity among college presidents is still lacking. During the 20-year period from 1986 to 2006, the percentage of White college presidents slightly decreased from 91.9% to 86.4%, allowing for little change in the face of the college presidency (Cowen, 2008). Correspondingly, from 1986 to 2006 the percentage of college presidents who were people of color increased from 8% in 1986 to 14% in 2006 (King & Gomez, 2008). Clearly, the selection of people of color to serve as college presidents has been slow and lags behind the gains seen by female college presidents, whose numbers more than doubled from 10% to 23% in the same timeframe (King & Gomez, 2008; June, 2008). Still, of the 86% of college and university presidents who were White, 77% of them were men, illustrating that the majority of higher education institutions are still led by White men (Cowen, 2008).

Moreover, although women and people of color have joined the ranks of the college presidency in growing numbers over the last 20 years, only a small minority of colleges and universities has experienced this growth. Of the 14% of college presidents who were people of color, 5% of them led institutions that served primarily African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians, leaving only 9% of these leaders in predominantly White institutions (King & Gomez, 2008; June, 2008). In their critique of the accuracy of statistics on minority, and particularly Latino college presidents, Delgado-Romero, Flores, Gloria, Arrendondo, and Castellanos (2003) noted that, in 1999, if the 44 Latino college presidents in Puerto Rico were omitted from the statistics, the percentage of Latino presidents would be reduced by almost half from 4% to 2.5%.

According to the de los Santos and Vega (2008) study, in 2006, there were 112 Latino college presidents in the continental United States, which represented only about 2.7% of college presidents, and simultaneously revealed an increase of only .2% since 1999. Most recently, the Chronicle of Higher Education's 2009–2010 *Almanac* (Selingo, 2009), which contains data from a survey of institutions in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, and had a 63% response rate, noted that 4.6% of college presidents are Latino. These observations highlight both the reality of the shortage of CEOs of color leading the nation's higher education institutions, and the extremely slow pace at which the demographics of the college presidency are changing.

In fact, the American Council on Education (ACE) noted the critical role of higher education leadership diversity in the continuing preeminence of U.S. education and started a multiyear, multiorganization effort, called The Spectrum Initiative (Renick, 2008). The Spectrum Initiative aimed to increase diversity of college leaders by conducting research on best practices, seeking guidance from current presidential and other academic leaders, encouraging senior leaders to assess their leadership development processes, coordinating current efforts, and developing training opportunities for aspiring leaders. Recent descriptions of the initiative's offerings include facilitation by presidential leaders of diverse backgrounds and dialogue that explores the presidential search through the lenses of race and gender (Spectrum Executive Leadership Program, 2001). Despite the inclusion of diverse perspectives, it is not clear whether the programming examines how cultural background may be a benefit and a source of challenges for diverse leaders. For example, research on Latino college presidents noted

that Latinos credited their cultural backgrounds not only with supporting their rise to leadership posts, but also with helping them overcome some of the barriers they faced as they advanced in their careers (Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Studies show that the cultural background of underrepresented leaders of color in higher education may be misunderstood or negatively viewed, and subsequently pose some challenges to their advancement (Haro, 1995). In addition, leaders of color may have trouble finding the supports they need to be successful in their roles, further impacting their ascent to executive leadership roles (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). A Latino's cultural background may be seen by the White majority in higher education as conflicting with the culture of academia and what is valued in higher education (Ibarra, 2001). As a result, the cultural strengths of Latino leaders may be misunderstood at best, or devalued at worst. Latino leaders may not enter or advance in academia because a search committee cannot relate to or comprehend their perspective (Haro, 1995) or because research interests of Latinos may be seen by predominantly White scholars in traditional disciplines, who chair or represent the majority of the members on tenure review committees, as irrelevant to the institution's academic focus on those traditional disciplines (Reyes, 2005; Torres-Guzmán, 1995; Verdugo, 1995). Consequently, although the higher education community needs more leaders of various racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds, it has not yet figured out how to incorporate and support the expression of those cultures in academia.

Problem Statement

Better understanding the role of culture in hiring and advancing in academia may be crucial to diversifying college leadership. The alarmingly stagnant rate at which diversity in college leadership is increasing suggests that radically different approaches are needed to effect change. Although it is vital to expose diverse college administrators to training opportunities that can better position them for presidencies, it may be equally important to examine how racial and cultural differences and strengths play a role, not just in the daily lives of college administrators, but also in their advancement.

The problem this research addresses is the lack of racial/ethnic diversity among college presidents in the United States, specifically the lack of Latino college presidents, and the need to understand the ways cultural background may serve as a facilitator to their success. Specifically, it is imperative for research to explore ways Latino college presidents use their culture as a source of strength rather than as a deficit to overcome, particularly because presidents' cultural assets may be key factors in the support, recruitment, and retention of diverse leaders. Moreover, as the demands on higher education continue to increase, due to many factors including changing demographics and an increasingly global society, college and university leaders will need to have a range of skills to address the changing landscape of higher education. Latino leaders can add perspectives and approaches that may assist their institutions in achieving their goals more effectively, while providing role models for the increasingly diverse student population (Hurtado & Kamimura, 2003; Leon & Nevarez, 2006).

The lack of diversity of college and university presidents may present negative implications particularly for students of color (King & Gomez, 2008; Renick, 2008). Students of color, specifically African Americans and Latinos, do not fare as well as their Asian American and White counterparts in higher education degree completion (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Researchers noted that Latino student success will require increased diversity in higher education leadership roles (Hurtado & Kamimura, 2003; Leon & Nevarez, 2006). Diverse leaders in higher education help create a sense of equity at institutions, prepare students for the challenges of a global society, and contribute to the academic achievement of students of color (Leon & Nevarez, 2006, Smith-Maddox, 1998). As more campuses see the diversity of their student body increase, it will be critical that institutions provide them with role models and leaders who not only reflect diverse backgrounds, but who can also contribute to diverse students' retention and success.

Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of my research is to explore the factors that contribute to Latino college presidents' advancement and success in higher education. Given that barriers exist and the dearth of Latino college presidents, it is important to understand what contributes to the success of the few who have ascended to the executive level, and particularly, the ways cultural background of Latino leaders was instrumental in their approach to leadership and their subsequent rise to the senior post at colleges and universities. Examining those factors that sustain and lift Latino leaders in higher education can provide institutions and leadership programs with information and

approaches that can support the success of more Latino college leaders. Throughout this proposal, the terms Latino, Hispanic, and Chicano will be used interchangeably to coincide with terms researchers used in discussing this population.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following questions:

What factors promote success for Latino college presidents?

- a. In what ways do Latino college presidents use specific elements of their cultural backgrounds to ascend to leadership roles?
- b. How does the cultural background of Latino college presidents guide their approach to and view of their roles in higher education?

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to offer insight in to the specific ways Latino college presidents use their cultural background and cultural values as assets to build and strengthen their careers. The findings from my research can help policy makers, administrators of color, and faculty understand how cultural values are manifested in the experiences of Latino college presidents and how cultural values have contributed to success for Latino executives in higher education. Researchers interested in investigating the factors that support the success of people of color in higher education will find this study helpful, as it examined the specific ways culture contributed to the achievements of diverse populations on campuses.

Leaders in higher education and national organizations such as ACE may find this study useful as they seek to prepare for impending retirements of a large number of

current presidents and seek to create opportunities to diversify the presidency (King & Gomez, 2008). Those involved in creating policies may identify key factors that could inform programs or mandates to increase access to opportunities for more students, faculty, or administrators of color. In fact, Leon and Nevarez (2006) argued that preparing increasing numbers of Latino administrators required the development of executive-leadership programs. Although providing opportunity will be critical, my study findings revealed key qualities of Latino cultural values that the field of higher education could more effectively welcome or support on campuses. Efforts by institutions and national organizations to diversify the presidency, including ACE's Spectrum Initiative, could benefit from learning specific ways that cultural values manifest themselves in the executive leadership of Latinos and consequently enrich institutions (Renick, 2008). Further, understanding the ways current Latino presidents perceived their cultural values as central will assist policy makers in identifying strategies to better support the inclusion and support of different cultures in leadership-development efforts or in initiatives to increase diversity among campus administrators and executive leaders. Moreover, the findings may inform gaps in current practices such as a lack of culturally relevant strategies that may be failing to prepare Latino professionals in higher education for college presidencies. Overall, the findings from this research may help uncover data that can improve hiring and professional-development policies or programs so they are more inclusive, addressing Latino higher education professionals' needs, and more proactive, ensuring the success of more Latinos who wish to pursue executive leadership.

The research findings from this study may also be helpful to administrators in creating inclusive environments that support the success of administrators, faculty, and students of color. Practices and policies in higher education have excluded people of color and therefore have to be targeted (Valverde, 2003). Similarly, in their review of 15 years of research on campus racial climates, Harper and Hurtado (2007) noted that although students of diverse backgrounds perceive racial climate differently and students of color experienced discrimination, “creating opportunities for meaningful cross-racial engagement” (p. 14) helped establish less segregated, more welcoming campuses. This study may be useful to administrators in identifying or developing specific opportunities that encourage and foster cultural exploration and education. Moreover, to effectively increase diversity on college campuses, Aguirre and Martinez (2002) suggested a transformational-leadership approach that sought to transform organizational culture from exclusive to inclusive. Although this study focused on college presidencies, administrators may be able to use findings from this research to establish policies or practices that reflect a valuing and understanding of the relevance of culture for students, faculty, and other administrators of color.

Given that Latino college presidents did not always aspire to or plan for a presidency early in their careers (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005), it is possible that many other Latinos do not gain a presidency because they may not have honed the skills needed or identified the opportunities that current or former Latino college presidents achieved. Accordingly, findings from this study may help Latino administrators and other administrators of color recognize the strengths they can

derive from their culture to support their ascension and success. Understanding how other Latinos have used their cultural values as a way to distinguish themselves and their work may provide insight to Latinos who are beginning or continuing their careers in higher education.

In their review of 15 years of research on faculty of color, Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood (2008) suggested recommendations at the departmental, institutional, and national levels that addressed and supported diversity and cultural differences of faculty and their research. Therefore, faculty of color may find this research helpful as they are navigating the challenging terrain of tenure and promotion in higher education, as well as when they consider their opportunities to support students of color in the classroom. Understanding Latino college presidents' cultural values and how those strengths facilitated their ascension could help faculty members of color identify and harness their own cultural values to improve their experiences, the campus environment, and their chances of success and ascension to executive leadership roles. In sum, with information about how Latino college presidents used their cultural assets to lead and succeed, Latino faculty may be more inclined to consider executive leadership as a viable career step for themselves.

Lastly, the findings from this study contributed to the literature concerning the experiences of Latino college presidents by focusing on the strengths of their culture. In previous studies on Latino college presidents (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005), a considerable focus has been given to the barriers that Latino executive leaders face as well as facilitators to their success. In those studies, cultural

values and approaches emerged as having a positive impact on the careers of Latino college presidents. Simultaneously, the concept of the cultural strengths of communities of color, or cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), has been applied only to research on college students of color. My research contributes to the literature by using an assets-based approach to exploring the experiences of Latino college presidents, and applying the concept of cultural wealth to Latino executive leaders. A primary focus on cultural values and how Latino executive leaders viewed and used their culture as an advantage resulted in a richer understanding of the elements and role of culture in leadership roles. Further, because studies on culture are often marginalized to journals with a focus on race and ethnicity, connections of culture to leadership may result in broader applications of the findings, thereby making new contributions to the literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter starts with a description of the concepts of social and cultural capital, which serve as a context for the experiences of administrators and faculty of color. Next, a brief review of two bodies of literature, that of Latino faculty and that of administrators of color, will follow, with their suggested applications and alignment to the literature on Latino college presidents. Last, I examine the literature that explores the experiences of Latino college presidents. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework that includes theories of cultural capital, social capital, and cultural wealth.

Traditional Cultural and Social Capital as Barriers: A Context

Researchers on administrators of color, including Latino college presidents, noted that their small numbers on college and university campuses as well as elements of the higher education environment are common challenges (Mata, 1997; Moses, 1989; Muñoz, 2008; Neilson, 2002; Patitu, & Hinton, 2003; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005; Turner, 2007; Valverde, 2003; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). In view of these obstacles, the concepts of social and cultural capital may provide a theoretical framework to better understand the successes and challenges of administrators of color in academia. Social capital and cultural capital are advantages individuals possess based on their backgrounds or affiliations with groups that help them advance or improve their life

outcomes (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). In particular, individuals experience social capital as an asset, based on one's social networks or associations (Lin, 1999). Coleman (1988) described social capital as elements of social interactions that provided benefits to those engaging with each other. Some benefits of social capital include the expectation that individuals in the same network would support each other and would have access to a broader base of information and resources provided by members of their social network. The more connections an individual has to others with power or assets, the more social capital that person is said to have.

In contrast, cultural capital is the inherited knowledge and experience gained from the valued culture in a society that allows one to use this familiarity to successfully navigate environments created and informed by that valued culture (Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). The valued culture in American society, identified by Bourdieu (1983), is upper class and White. Using the concept of cultural capital, Bourdieu (1983) sought to explain how inequities in school achievement might be related to social class. Cultural capital or knowledge of upper-class culture and cues was likely to be found in individuals of higher socioeconomic status and to contribute to their educational success. In addition, higher education institutions reflect and value the behaviors, expectations, and norms of the dominant, privileged class, and thus exclude those who are not members of this group (Bourdieu, 1983; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). The valued class keeps resources, jobs, or membership in high-status groups from others, to culturally and socially exclude them (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). As a result, in higher education, administrators of color in predominantly White institutions often lack the

social and cultural capital of those institutional communities, producing adverse conditions for them.

In addition to cultural capital, social capital comprises networks and associations with access to power that individuals use to obtain advantages (Bourdieu, 1983).

Networks that are resource rich offer exposure and connection to varied expertise and resources and lead to social advantages (Lin, 2000). Therefore, individuals with social capital have access to opportunities and benefits that support their advancement.

Moreover, policies and practices based on social networks have served to segregate and create racially homogenous communities (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006). In college and university settings, individuals who do not belong to the dominant class, including low-income and working-class groups, or people of color, tend not to succeed at the same levels as those who are members of the dominant group. Bourdieu (1983) believed that this was due to these groups' lack of social and cultural capital in these settings.

Although the above descriptions and understandings of social and cultural capital as exclusionary provide a potential explanation for the underrepresentation of certain populations or groups in higher education, they are not a complete reflection of the forms of capital that Latinos do possess, discussed in detail later in this chapter. Latinos are at a disadvantage in colleges and universities, which are predominantly White, because they do not share the same type of cultural capital as that valued in higher education and with the majority population (Verdugo, 2003). Additionally, they are further disadvantaged because they tend not to possess the type of networks and connections to individuals in power or the social capital that can help them advance (Haro, 1995). These forms of

capital, which will be referred to as traditional social and cultural capital in this study, provide a framework to describe the types of barriers and challenges Latinos and other people of color face in higher education.

Experiences in Higher Education Roles: Faculty and Administrators of Color

To supplement the paucity of literature on Latino college presidents, it was necessary to include literature that illustrated connections to the experiences of Latino college presidents. The literature on Latino faculty is critical to this discussion because whereas many presidents rise through the ranks via faculty roles, Latino faculty, in particular, share the qualities of being bicultural and bilingual, and the unique benefits and challenges of these characteristics. Although the literature on Latino college faculty demonstrates linkages to the experiences of Latino college presidents in acceptance and support as Latinos in one role in higher education, it does not speak to the dynamics related to power and authority that administrators face. In contrast, research on administrators of color has explored the ways administrators' leadership has been fostered, supported, or hindered in higher education and the role of culture in educational leadership roles. Because administrators of color share experiences with Latino college presidents, the following sections also discuss research on administrators of color. Finally, I explore the literature on Latino college presidents and the research that has explored their experiences. In conclusion, the dearth of literature on Latino college presidents has resulted in little information about their experiences and what facilitates their success. With the projected dramatic growth of the U.S. Latino population in the next 20 years, the higher education community must learn more about the experiences of

Latino college presidents to better support the ascent of more Latinos to executive-leadership roles.

Latino Faculty: Challenges and Contributions in Higher Education

The obstacles that professionals of color face in academia affect them in various roles. Although the focus of this study is on Latino college presidents, research on Latino faculty and administrators of color can supplement the paucity of research on Latino executive leaders in higher education. In fact, the research on Latino college faculty may be particularly informative of Latino college presidents' experiences for the following reasons. First, in their 2008 report, "On the Pathway to the Presidency: Characteristics of Higher Education's Senior Leadership," ACE noted that to increase the diversity of the presidency, institutions must increase the number of diverse faculty, primarily because most current college presidents have served as faculty members on their paths to a presidential appointment (King & Gomez, 2008). Further, 56% of presidents in the 2008 ACE study reported that their immediate prior position was as chief academic officer, provost, or other senior-executive position in academic affairs. Between 80 and 85% of chief academic officers, provosts, and academic-affairs senior executives came from faculty roles or academic administrative roles. Thus, understanding the challenges contributing to low numbers of Latino faculty members may reveal conduit issues that need to be considered in addressing the small number of Latino presidents. Moreover, with the dearth of research on Latino college presidents, research on Latino faculty may provide information about experiences in higher education that are consistent with those of Latino presidents.

Latinos' experiences in higher education may be distinct from experiences of other people of color, in that they may face biases related to assumptions made about their migration to the United States or their intelligence based on their accent, for example (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). For this reason, exploring the research findings of Latino faculty may provide data that is relevant to Latino presidents. Finally, a review of the research on Latino faculty, as a supplement to the research on other presidents of color, can help identify specific challenges and facilitators to advancement for Latino college presidents.

Research on Latino college faculty reflects the considerable challenges they experience, both entering the field of higher education and as they seek advancement. In the hiring process, Latino faculty members are met with bias and stereotypes from hiring committees that hinder their entry into academia (Verdugo, 2003). Instead of merit being a primary criterion for achieving a tenure-track faculty position, hidden politics, bias against Latinos, and a concern for maintaining their own power contributed to mostly White hiring committees deciding against Latino candidates (Padilla, 2003; Valverde, 2003; Verdugo, 2003). Once Latinos enter academia, the challenges of bias and discrimination continue, with colleagues questioning their research and credibility, or as they strive to obtain tenure, for example.

For those Latinos who obtain tenure-track faculty positions, the norms, values, expectations, or bias of departments or tenure review committees serve to keep Latino faculty stratified in academia without tenure (Reyes, 2005; Torres-Guzman, 1995; Verdugo, 1995). Statistics on Latino faculty members show they remain overrepresented

among the lower ranks of the faculty. In 2009, the highest concentration of Latinos, at 64.1% was in the lowest ranked category, which included instructors, lecturers, and untenured faculty (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In contrast, 35.8% of Latino faculty members were in the full-time, tenured ranks. Moreover, Latinos represent only 3% of all full-time tenured faculty. Not only does prestige come with tenure, but tenure also opens the possibilities for faculty members to gain opportunities for leadership roles, such as department chairs or deans. It is from these roles that faculty members are often tapped for vice president or presidential roles (King & Gomez, 2008). For these reasons, tenure is a key part of the pathway to a presidency.

Latinos have historically fared poorly with tenure. Whereas the average tenure rate for White faculty was 75%, Latino faculty members' average was 64% (Delgado-Romero et al., 2003). Researchers have found some reasons that contribute to the low rates of tenure for Latino faculty members (Aguirre, 1995; Padilla, 2003; Reyes, 2005; Torres-Guzman, 1995). First, Latino faculty are expected to serve as ambassadors for their communities while also serving as experts and resources for students of color, their colleagues, and their institutions as a whole (Aguirre, 1995; Padilla, 2003; Reyes, 2005; Torres-Guzman, 1995) Unfortunately, these activities take time from research, publishing, or establishing teaching excellence, all of which are critical to obtaining tenure (Aguirre, 1995; Padilla, 2003). Second, research on culture and ethnicity, which is a focus of many Latino scholars, is often viewed as less rigorous by tenure committees, and works against a faculty member's tenure review (Ibarra, 2003). Finally, by virtue of being from a different ethnic background from tenure-review committee members, or

their interest in coauthoring an article when the academy values sole authorship, Latino faculty members suffer unfavorable decisions from tenure committees who do not relate to them or understand their approach. In spite of these challenges, however, Latino faculty members demonstrate resilience and determination to address and overcome these obstacles.

In the face of the difficult circumstances noted above, Latino faculty members put their energies toward their hopes for a better, more inclusive institution. Many told their stories in writing, made a commitment to mentor students, and devoted time and research to their communities (Aguirre, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Reyes, 2005; Torres-Guzman, 1995). Latino faculty members reach out to others, and specifically to other underrepresented faculty of color, for emotional support and to form support networks (Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Padilla, 2003; Torres-Guzman, 1995; Yosso, 2005). In addition, Latino faculty members are able to identify and make meaning of differential treatment and interactions with colleagues, students, and other stakeholders, helping them navigate the challenging terrain of higher education (Garcia, 2005; Reyes, 2005; Torres-Guzman, 1995). Finally, through counterstories and the expression of their voices, Latinos have confronted the inequality they have faced and contributed their unique perspectives to their campuses, exposing the challenges of their experiences as minorities on college campuses, and sharing the richness of their cultural backgrounds through stories about growing up Latino and focus on community and family (Aguirre, 1995; Aleman, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Reyes, 2005). In conclusion, the experiences of Latino faculty not only provide information about potential Latino

presidents who begin their careers as faculty members, but may also prove useful to identifying the assets Latinos bring to higher education as they interact with the challenges they face.

Obstacles and Successes of Administrators of Color in Higher Education

Research findings on the experiences of administrators of color illustrate commonalities with the experiences of Latino faculty members (Aguirre, 1995; Aleman, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Holmes, 2004; Neilson, 2002; Reyes, 2005; Turner, 2007). Each population experiences barriers from the start of their careers in higher education during the interview and hiring process, and as they are doing their work or building their careers, as in the tenure-review process (Padilla, 2003; Valverde, 2003; Verdugo, 2003) or when interviewing for executive-leadership posts (Turner, 2007). Both groups, the Latino faculty and administrators of color, meet the hurdles they encounter not with a sense of defeat, but rather from a sense of groundedness they appear to derive partly from their cultural backgrounds (Aguirre, 1995; Aleman, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Holmes, 2004; Neilson, 2002; Reyes, 2005; Turner, 2007). Correspondingly, in studies on administrators of color (Holmes, 2004; Neilson, 2002; Turner, 2007), the barriers they have faced and continue to endure stand in contrast to their success and powerful role as chief executives of their institutions.

One of the obstacles higher education administrators of color encounter as they try to enter academia has to do with misperceptions that others have about them. Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, class, or gender was cited across studies of administrators of color as having a negative impact on their hiring or advancement

(Holmes, 2004; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Turner, 2007). Discrimination based on such factors as racism or sexism, in particular, was seen as deterrents for administrators of color finding support and participating in decision making (Patitu & Hinton, 2003), and also in obtaining positions or promotions (Holmes, 2004; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). Furthermore, despite achieving a presidency, three women of color endured racial, ethnic, and gender bias during the hiring process in the form of inappropriate, sexist questions or having their voice or accent criticized (Turner, 2007). In conclusion, research findings indicated that although prejudiced comments or perceptions may not always prevent administrators of color from advancing, these negative stereotypes persist during the hiring process, and can have an impact on the final selection of candidates.

Once administrators of color achieve executive-leadership roles in higher education, the inhospitable climates they experienced during the hiring process continued, due to their incongruity with the culture and values of higher education institutions, combined with campuses' lack of experience with the presence or leadership of administrators of color (Moses, 1989; Neilson, 2002; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). Specifically, higher education cultural climates often reflect the experience and values of the majority; thus, diverse leaders found that their different cultural values and approaches were seen negatively or devalued (Moses, 1989; Neilson, 2002; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989).

Exacerbating these misperceptions of administrators of color, most campus communities were new to having diverse leaders and did not want to or did not know how to express value or support for diverse leadership styles or approaches (Moses, 1989;

Neilson, 2002; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). Consequently, the cultural knowledge and experiences that administrators of color and campus communities possess resulted in administrators of color experiencing misperceptions that sometimes led to discrimination (Moses, 1989; Neilson, 2002; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). Moreover, once administrators of color achieved an executive-leadership role, the prejudiced perceptions slightly shifted to focus on their leadership competencies. In studies on presidents of color (Neilson, 2002; Waring, 2003), research participants disclosed misperceptions of their leadership abilities, due to their racial or cultural backgrounds. Presidents cited that because of their gender or race, they had to be more strategic about how they communicated, to be able to effect change (Waring, 2003). Other presidents of color noted that their strong leadership skills were seen as contrary to stereotypes about them (Neilson, 2002). In conclusion, due to racial, cultural, or gender bias, or a lack of familiarity with higher education culture, college presidents of color felt they consistently had to prove themselves, sometimes by purposely behaving in ways counter to the stereotypes others had about them.

As administrators of color encountered negative perceptions from their colleagues, they also dealt with isolation and lack of guidance or mentorship that might have helped mitigate the effects of those stereotypes (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Valverde, 2003). Mentoring was perceived as critical for professionals of color in learning a new job or work environment (Valverde, 2003). Further, administrators of color noted that the absence of mentoring resulted in reporting their career paths were not planned, leading to less career satisfaction (Crawford & Smith, 2005). For some administrators of color, the

prevalence of racism or sexism on their campuses prevented them from finding mentoring support or a sense of community (Moses, 1989; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Williams, 1989). Due to the continuing shortage of administrators of color on campuses, a lack of networks and support remains a key factor that produces inhospitable climates. In sum, administrators of color face an array of obstacles, often related to others' negative views about and corresponding reactions to them that serve to make their journey in higher education difficult. However, as they face these barriers, administrators of color also exhibit qualities and perspectives that help them cope with discrimination.

Despite facing barriers associated with racism and sexism, administrators of color used their strengths, communities, and positive perspectives to withstand challenges (Holmes, 2004; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Turner, 2007; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). Using personal qualities, such as strong communication skills and an ability to connect with others by sharing their experiences and stories, was vital to the success of administrators of color (Turner, 2007; Waring, 2003). Moreover, a skill to which many administrators of color alluded was their ability to handle the higher education culture and politics to advance by working harder and smarter than their colleagues (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Williams, 1989), by looking for opportunities to become more visible leaders and viable presidential candidates (Turner, 2007), and by using their ability to decipher what others wanted to inform their approach to work (Waring, 2003).

Although administrators of color possessed impressive strengths, they also sought others to support and motivate them. Administrators discussed that the networks they were able to establish with colleagues or communities were central to inspiring their hope

for bettering their institutions (Holmes, 2004; Turner, 2007; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). In turn, these networks or communities became a focus for administrators of color, as they sought to serve as mentors to members of their community and increase opportunities or improve campus environments through their leadership roles (Holmes, 2004; Turner, 2007; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). Administrators of color passively wait for change to happen; they used their positions to serve as role models for their communities as well as advocates for changes to make their institutions more inclusive and accessible (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Waring, 2003; Williams, 1989). Ultimately, as administrators of color encountered unsupportive institutions, they identified opportunities to increase their skills, knowledge, and networks, and to work through challenges to find success.

In sum, the literature on Latino college faculty and administrators of color illustrated the barriers they faced and the ways they have responded to those challenges. As noted below, the literature on Latino college presidents demonstrates some similarities that Latino executives share with Latino college faculty and other administrators of color. The literature on Latino college presidents addresses their challenges as senior administrators and accentuates the significant role of culture in their professional lives.

Latino College Presidents: From Challenges to Resourceful Responses

Stereotyping and Bias: The Hiring Process and Advancement

Studies exploring the experience of Latino professions in higher education noted the prevalence of stereotypes about Latinos in higher education and how those misconceptions led to bias, particularly during the hiring process (Haro, 1995; Turner,

2007). Haro's (1995) seminal study of Latino candidates interviewing for the positions of president or academic vice president revealed rampant biases in the selection process for executive leaders. Haro (1995) examined the hiring process of 19 colleges and universities who were selecting a president or academic vice president and who also had a Latino finalist in the candidate pool. Haro found that Latino finalists consistently were expected to have achieved at higher levels than their White counterparts. In fact, Latino finalists had less of a chance of being selected to be president or academic vice president than White male finalists, even when their experience was equal to or exceeded their White male counterpart's experience. Specifically, in one case, scholarly productivity by a Latino candidate was more extensive than his White male competitor's, yet did not garner the Latino the position, because two committee members saw this high productivity as a disadvantage. Although Haro (1995) did not explain why the higher level of productivity was seen negatively in that particular Latino candidate's situation, faculty, administrators, and trustees across different campuses saw ambitious Latinos as "presumptuous" "contentious" or "lacking seasoning" (p. 197). Thus, Latino candidates faced the conundrum of being expected to have the highest of qualifications and professional experiences while those qualities were simultaneously a disadvantage to Latinos as hiring decisions were made.

Although qualifications and experience became barriers to acquiring a position, Latino candidates in Haro's (1995) study were also hindered by their leadership approach or their scholarship focus on their community. Haro found that search-committee members viewed scholarship that was Latino or ethnic focused as less scholarly. Thus, a

Latino faculty member's or administrator's interest in such areas may pose a threat to advancement and hiring. Further, in this study, Latino finalists' personality or leadership style was often negatively perceived, despite search-committee members revealing they had ultimately chosen to hire White candidates over Latino candidates who possessed similar leadership qualities or personality traits to those of the White candidate. In view of these findings, Haro concluded that double standards were rampant and often led to the exclusion of Latino finalists. Correspondingly, Latino presidents in Muñoz's (2008) study cited the lack of diversity on boards of trustees, which are responsible for hiring college presidents, as working against them when trustees could not relate to Latino candidates or would not consider them to be serious candidates. Moreover, although the Latina president in Turner's (2007) study was selected to be president, she noted how being seen as "too Latina" was an issue that made her candidacy for president controversial. Finally, during the interview process for executive-level positions, Latino candidates have experienced negative interactions with search committees or have been wrongly denied positions due to bias and discrimination by search committees.

Stereotyping and Bias: On the Job

Once hired for executive-leadership positions, Latino college presidents encountered bias either directly or indirectly by colleagues or campus and external community members. Most Latino presidents participating in research studies saw challenging stereotypes as part of their role, albeit they were sometimes surprised at the frequency of the misperceptions (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos; 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In Mata's (1997) study of Latino community college leaders, some presidents

revealed they not only had to overcome stereotypes of leaders among Latino community members, but also had to prove to the external and internal communities that Latinos were skilled and competent leaders. Latino presidents communicated the sentiment of always having to prove themselves and outdo everyone else (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Regardless of their credentials or their subsequent performance on the job, Latino presidents' credibility was often questioned by colleagues or trustees. Studies looking at Latina presidents revealed that gender bias and sexism worked in a similar way, undermining their authority and undervaluing their skills (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos; 2008). Latina presidents' competence and ability to lead were questioned at times for reasons that had little to do with whether they could actually lead an institution (Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008). For some presidents, these experiences of racism and sexism added to their internal pressure of wanting to do well in their roles and not let their community down (Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In conclusion, due to their race and ethnicity, Latino college presidents have endured hostile or unsupportive environments. Latina college presidents experienced an added layer of bias due to their gender.

Isolation and Lack of Networks

Exacerbating the effects of discrimination based on stereotypes that Latino college presidents face in higher education is their lack of established, influential networks. Valverde (2003) asserted that, in higher education, institutional policy and practice is dominated by Whites, and thus reflects their culture and not the culture of underrepresented administrators of color. This underrepresentation results in adverse

climates where support may be critical, as well as hard to find. Specifically, not having a community in higher education from which to draw support and guidance also serves as a disadvantage to Latino presidential candidates (Haro, 1995). Once Latino leaders obtain presidential roles, the absence of a network of Latino leaders continues to make adjustment at the institution a challenging and very solitary experience for Latino presidents (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Latino institutional leaders lamented the fact that the high demand of their roles and the lack of others in similar circumstances were isolating (Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). They did not have colleagues on campus who shared their perspectives or challenges.

Some presidents discussed being the first Latino/Latina or woman president, and the challenges of breaking barriers and stereotypes (Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Although other faculty, staff members, and trustees made assumptions because they had rarely, if ever, met someone like the Latino leader, s/he was forced to cope with these misperceptions by trying to undo them. There was no “good ole boys” network or group welcoming these Latino leaders or helping them navigate the system or history of their institutions (Mata, 1997). Many Latino college leaders mentioned the difficulty of navigating the complex system of higher education (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008). Without a strong support network at their institution, Latino presidents have had to manage the stereotypes their colleagues have of them while also working to decipher the complex system they are leading.

Impact and Advancement Despite Challenges

Latinos face significant challenges, first, in obtaining positions of leadership, and second, in integrating themselves into their campus communities, due to others' misperceptions about them and subsequent discrimination based on those misperceptions. As Latino administrators reflected on their experiences they noted a collective reality about how their colleagues, campus communities, and trustees underestimated or undermined them. The irony of their mutual negative experience is that they also shared the experience of having achieved positions of leadership and success in their roles. Just as importantly, emerging in the narratives of Latino college presidents was a picture of how they believed they were able to advance professionally. For all of them, the role of community was central, as was the existence of leadership-development opportunities (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Particularly notable among the findings of the research was the recognition that many executive leaders gave to their cultural backgrounds and values as central to their success (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Neilson, 2002; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). The following discussion explores the specific ways cultural background and cultural values of administrators of color played a role in their professional achievements.

As Latino college presidents disclosed their sometimes painful journeys to success, they also demonstrated a cultural pride and commitment to effecting change (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008). In their view, higher education environments had the potential to improve not just for them, but for all campus community members (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008). They envisioned campuses becoming more

open to a range of perspectives and populations and devoted themselves to being active in improving their institutions. Although Latino college presidents cited the role of culture as a barrier in the hiring process, or as they tried to feel at home on their campuses, in their view, the power of their culture helped them to create a clear identity and sense of purpose that ultimately contributed to their success.

In a mixed-methods study, Muñoz (2008) surveyed 22 Latina community college presidents and interviewed 13 of the 22 about the influences that impacted their success and the barriers that challenged their path to the presidency. The Latina presidents in Muñoz's study credited early family influences and cultural experiences with helping them develop value systems and career-related decision making. Sometimes their experiences at a young age of having to represent their family by translating or representing their community helped these leaders develop their speaking and advocacy skills, and subsequent dedication to access for underserved students. Ramos (2008) found a similar focus on the importance of culture in interviews with three Latina presidents and 13 executive-level Latina administrators to determine institutional and other effects that supported or hindered Latinas' career trajectories. Participants in Ramos's (2008) study chose to maintain their cultural identity and rejected the notion they had to assimilate to succeed. From their culture and ethnicity, these Latina leaders derived a sense of purpose, a focus on being inclusive, and an unwavering commitment to access. Finally, these leaders saw their cultural and personal identity as key to keeping them strong in the midst of the challenges they faced.

The role of culture in developing leadership approaches was also evident in Rodriguez's qualitative study (2005) of four immigrant Latino presidents at community colleges in California. The presidents in Rodriguez's (2005) study noted that culture helped them develop not only who they were as individuals, but also who they became as leaders and presidents. Cultural values such as humility, respect, and an ethic of care were central to each president's approach to leading an institution. Further, Rodriguez asserted that the Latino traditional values of family, compassion, resilience learned from their parents' experiences, and a strong work ethic were a powerful complement to the mission of community colleges. Correspondingly, in a qualitative study of three Chicana community college presidents, Avalos (2011), found that although there were negative cultural elements, such as *marianismo* or idealized and professionally limiting gender roles with which Chicana's have to contend, there were also positive cultural traits such as collectivism and respect, which foster career growth.

Presidential leadership was also impacted by Latino's cultural background as noted in Mata's (1997) multimethod study: researcher conducted a survey of 40 Latino community college presidents, consulted with a panel of experts, and interviewed five Latino community college presidents in three southwestern states. Presidents in Mata's study defined leadership in relation to others, reflecting a concern for and focus on the community in their leadership approach. The majority of leaders used participative or shared leadership as presidents. In responding to a survey item on the effectiveness of leaders, 79% of the 40 community college presidents surveyed noted that to truly be an effective leader, Latinos should function as a Latino/a, instead of avoiding emphasis of

their cultural backgrounds. Functioning as a Latino included having drive and ambition, a sense of self, a commitment to the Latino community to get ahead, and an interest in helping the Latino community's interests. In summary, Latino college presidents perceived that leadership effectiveness for Latinos was rooted in their culture and the strength of their cultural values.

Each of the studies described above focused solely on Latina/o college presidents, examined their challenges, and their responses to those challenges. As noted, although Latina/o presidents' cultural background may have limited their access to a supportive work environment in academia, it has also served as a critical asset to their rise to a presidential position as well as their efforts to make institutions more responsive to students and communities of color. In essence, Latino college presidents' lack of traditional cultural and social capital or the barriers they endure provide a partial view of their experiences in higher education. For a more complete view of the experiences of Latino college presidents, an exploration of their successes and the assets they bring with them to campuses, most notably their cultural values and experiences, was essential.

Overcoming Barriers in Higher Education: The Impact of Culture

Although, as a professional in the higher education community, I still experience a sense of isolation and a lack of a community of peers, I have become clear about the role that my family and specifically, my culture have played in helping me succeed to the levels I have achieved. I have transformed my disappointment about the higher education's community inadequate support of my Latino community into a belief that I have a place in effecting change and improving circumstances for the next generation of

Latinos. My ability to build a rapport with the people I come across in my work, diverse in race, culture, position, or role has increased my effectiveness as a liaison to the community. Earlier in my career as an administrator, I believed I had to conform, to mold myself so that my need for a culturally inclusive environment was diminished. However, as I started to review the experiences of other Latinos, I began to realize a commonality of purpose. As I have matured in my career, my longer hours of work coordinating diversity events and difficult dialogue about the lack of inclusiveness of institutional policies and practices, these draining activities, have become the work of my heart. I had no choice but to use my role to create better spaces for more Latinos to succeed, and in that role I have found a meaningful direction and clarity of purpose. My unwavering commitment to access was inspired by my family's challenges in education: four of my seven siblings did not graduate from high school and only one has also achieved a college degree. Reflecting on my career and aspirations I realize that my dedication to the change I can effect and the goals I can achieve is intertwined with the respect I have for my family and my continuing quest to honor their experiences.

Latino college presidents talked about their formative years with their families as key to their identities and their work as leaders in higher education (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In recent studies (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005), Latino college presidents shared what they learned, from an early age, about family, responsibility, and commitment to one's own people and culture. In effect, Latinos learned the cultural values that have worked for them in their careers from their families of origin. The hardships they and their families overcame were

a testament to their resilience and acknowledgement that family and community were central to the goals of their work and the core of their being (Rodriguez, 2005).

Reflecting on this incredible connection to cultural history and family, Gonzalez (1995) wrote,

It is the endurance and resilience, the maintenance of contact, the extended network of social obligation that transcends negative history. This is where my voice comes from. Its volume might come from the anger of injustice, but its essence comes from those instances that built the strength of my character. (p. 89)

In a counterstory, *In Search of the Voice I Always Had*, Gonzalez (1995) recognized that the multiple aspects of Latinos' experiences and qualities are the tools that help them overcome challenges. The ability of Latinos to persist in the midst of challenges and to maintain a connection to their community helps them rise above the limited conditions or resources they have been provided. Moreover, although injustices might motivate Latinos to speak out, it is their backgrounds and experiences from which they derive their strength of character to advocate for change.

Critical Race Theory: Shifting the Perception of Latino Experiences in Higher Education

Qualitative studies and particularly narratives of Latino faculty and Latino and other presidents of color illustrated the variety of ways they used their cultural background and values as a strength in the midst of a challenging environment (Aguirre, 1995; Aleman, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Holmes, 2004; Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Reyes, 2005; Rodriguez, 2005; Turner, 2007; Waring, 2003).

Although identifying and exploring barriers is critical to eliminating them, examining and highlighting the strengths of administrators of color may also be an important factor in mitigating the effects of those challenges. Many of the narratives of Latino faculty members (Aguirre, 1995; Aleman, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Reyes, 2005) and studies on administrators of color (Holmes, 2004; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008) used critical race theory (CRT). The premise of CRT is that race and racism are central in U.S. society, recognizing the legitimacy of the experiential knowledge of people of color. With CRT used as a lens in research, the context of the struggles administrators of color endure is understood and defined through their experiences, perspectives, and voices (Gonzalez, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Yosso, 2005). CRT is a framework developed by legal scholars that has been applied to education since 1995, when Ladson-Billings and Tate proposed the continuing and significant role of race in education, and thus the appropriateness of using CRT in exploring educational equity issues in educational scholarship. In furthering the applications of CRT, the development of Latino critical theory addressed the specific layers of racialized subordination experienced by Latinos that were different from the Black–White binary that characterized the traditional U.S. race relations paradigm (K. R. Johnson & Martinez, 2000; Yosso, 2005). Ladson-Billings (1999) noted that CRT must not only address racism in higher education, but must also provide potential resolutions that are radical and that aim to change current inequitable conditions. Furthermore, Neilson and Suyemoto (2009) proposed that not using culturally sensitive frameworks limits researchers’ ability to fully understand the experiences and realities of people of color. In sum, research using CRT is based on the reality that

administrators of color start from an unlevel stratum. CRT does not view administrators of color as deficient, but instead sees the value of their experiences and perspectives as instrumental to illuminating the challenges they face in effecting change.

Using CRT as a framework, Yosso (2005) argued that the traditional concepts of cultural and social capital narrowly focus on White, middle-class background and values, and in this way do not acknowledge communities of color. Yosso's community cultural wealth framework (2005) introduced a new model of capital, using a CRT lens, encompassing all of the resources and assets people of color bring as individuals to their settings and shape their experiences. The concept of community cultural wealth consists of six forms of capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant.

Each form of capital in the community-cultural-wealth model is distinct and speaks to varied attributes people of color bring to a setting or situation. With aspirational capital, people of color exhibit resilience that helps them maintain their hopes and dreams for the future in the face of difficult circumstances. Linguistic capital is relevant not just for bilingual Latinos, who, while translating for their parents, achieved social skills and understanding of dynamics or complex situations at an early age, but also signifies a range of communication skills that includes storytelling. Centered on an expanded concept of family and a commitment to community, familial capital motivates people of color to connect with each other and with community resources. In this model, with social capital, individuals create support networks and keep close connections to their communities and other communities of color. Navigational capital allows people of color to maneuver through systems and institutions that may pose many challenges for them

because of racism, discrimination, or inequality, for example. With navigational capital, individuals not only survive and thrive in difficult situations, but also carry forward lessons from those experiences. Finally, resistant capital refers to individuals responding to inequality or injustice by being oppositional. For example, Latino faculty members or administrators have chosen to tell their stories, unmasking the challenges and hardships they have faced through counterstories (Aguirre, 1995; Aleman, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Haro, 1995; Reyes, 2005). Although studies on Latino college presidents have not applied the framework of cultural wealth to the research process, the literature on their experiences and perspectives contained examples of each form of capital. The following section highlights how studies of Latino college presidents revealed expressions of cultural wealth forms of capital.

Aspirational Capital

Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges to which Latinos and other people of color are subjected in higher education, many remain committed to transforming institutions into places that welcome and create a space for them and their communities. This quality, which Yosso (2005) referenced as aspirational capital, helps Latinos and other people of color maintain their sense of hope for their institutions, as those very institutions create and maintain environments that are, at best, unsupportive, and at worst, disparaging (Yosso, 2005). Seeing their institutions challenged in fostering supportive and equitable environments for communities of color or low-income students, Latino presidents focused their energies and used their roles to increase access to college and opportunities for these communities (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008).

Most Latino presidents attributed their ability to survive and thrive in their challenging higher education environments on their backgrounds. Some Latino presidents noted their immigrant experience helped them develop values that kept them grounded and helped them overcome bias and persist (Muñoz, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Their Latino culture and traditions of viewing their professional communities as an extension of their family and engaging with them as such, feeling a sense of duty to that community and bringing people together for a common purpose, provided them with a sense of self and empowerment that helped them communicate effectively and facilitated their resilience (Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In Rodriguez's (2005) study of Latino immigrant presidents, the sacrifices of parents and their own first-generation college-student status were sources of inspiration and hope for the possibilities of the future. In their unshakeable faith in improving institutions, Latinos were not oblivious to the political undercurrents and bias present in their professional lives (Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Finally, despite experiencing racism, sexism, or homophobia, Latino college presidents persisted at their institutions with the goal of creating truly inclusive environments that more effectively served diverse communities.

Linguistic Capital

One form of capital that facilitates communication for Latino executives is their heightened ability to communicate through multiple methods or linguistic capital, which helps Latino presidents bridge cultural gaps in their higher education communities. As presidents, Latinos' ability to speak Spanish, their experience of straddling two cultures, and their use of storytelling as a way of connecting and communicating with others were

critical to their effectiveness in working with a range of stakeholders (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). One Latino president shared that seeking interactions with students and telling them his story allowed students to bond with him and also see that they had an accessible role model in him (Mata, 1997).

In some ways, being bilingual and bicultural (growing up Latino while also being exposed to American culture) heightened the awareness of Latino presidents about the different culture of higher education that they had to learn, and about the racial and political dynamics inherent in their campus environments (Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In addition to helping Latino college presidents learn skills that helped them relate to others more effectively, these language and cultural experiences helped them develop an approach and direction for their lives. For example, some presidents shared that their early experiences as translators for their families motivated them to become advocates for others (Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). These narratives highlighted how Latino presidents' backgrounds served as a bridge to others in their work and as an inspiration to their commitment to social-justice issues.

Familial Capital

A focus on community and family emerged as central to Latino college presidents, reflecting the presence of familial capital. Family influences and experiences shaped Latino presidents' commitment to their communities (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). For some Latino presidents, knowing about their parents' struggles migrating to a new country, adjusting to a new culture, or having experienced the challenges of racism and sexism directly inspired their desire to support

underrepresented or underserved students (Muñoz, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). As mentioned earlier, Latino presidents saw the greater community of students, faculty, and community as an extended family for which they bore some responsibility to support (Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). The values instilled in them by their families led Latino presidents to use their roles to open the doors of opportunity at their institutions for their communities (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In fact, the more inclusive vision of community colleges to provide college access to underserved communities appealed to Latino presidents who felt a duty to the external communities of which their campuses were a part (Muñoz, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In conclusion, Latino presidents' value of family drove them to lead institutions with a vision to include more of their communities in the life of their campuses.

Social Capital

For Latino college presidents, the focus on building relationships and networks was central to their leadership approach. As mentioned earlier, Latino presidents, possibly due to their broader roles in the academy, managed to build useful relationships with mentors or other key individuals, such as trustees or external leaders (Muñoz, 2008; Rodriguez, 2008). Latino presidents in Rodriguez's (2008) study attributed their professional success in academia to executive college leaders who provided them with mentorship, encouragement, and challenging opportunities. Additionally, Latino presidents consistently credited their effectiveness and success with also establishing relationships with other leaders of color in the community, or through participation in training or professional-development institutes (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008;

Rodriguez, 2005). Latino presidents believed that participating in leadership institutes helped them obtain their presidencies (Mata, 1997). Finally, Latino presidents recognized the value of developing and maintaining networks, and this, combined with mentors who provided guidance and opportunities, allowed Latino Presidents to use their networks to advance.

Navigational Capital

Latino college presidents were very resourceful in figuring out ways to negotiate higher education processes, politics, and other challenges. Having developed strong communication skills and maintained a footing in Latino and the dominant culture allowed them to maneuver through challenging situations in Anglo-dominated and Anglo-normed institutions to advance to their positions (Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Moreover, some of the ways Latino college presidents navigated the racism or sexism they encountered was by constantly reflecting on potential dynamics and being selective about which battles to fight or when to address an issue, to change others' behavior toward them (Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). In some cases, mentors or leadership-development programs provided these future presidents with networking resources and opportunities to expand the skills and knowledge necessary to better grasp the complexity of the higher education environment (Muñoz, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). With the primary goal of improving their institutions, Latino presidents work through challenges and boundaries and take risks by bringing forward their interests in supporting Latino student access, commanding respect in how they were introduced—by title instead of by first name—and choosing to maintain their culture rather than assimilate (Mata, 1997; Muñoz,

2008; Ramos, 2008). Responding strategically to the challenges they face, Latino college presidents succeed in their positions while they lift their communities to better opportunities.

Resistant Capital

The majority of Latino presidents saw themselves as change agents, and fought to improve the inclusivity and sense of social justice at their institutions and in higher education in general (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005).

Although Latino faculty discussed counterstories as helping them confront inequality (Aguirre, 1995; Aleman, 1995; Garcia, 2005; Gonzalez, 1995; Reyes, 2005), as Latinos moved into presidential roles, their resistance efforts addressed stereotypes and issues of access to education (Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008). Being the most prepared at the table to combat stereotypes related to their credibility and using their bicultural background as a source of insight instead of assimilating, Latina administrators in Ramos's (2008) study resisted being defined or disadvantaged by their institutions.

Some Latina executives chose to confront search firms about their common practice of tokenizing people of color by placing them on interview lists without the intention of hiring them (Ramos, 2008). Their goal was to engage search firms in authentic dialogue about diversity, influencing them to include more people of color in a pool and view them as competitive candidates. Sometimes challenging the status quo can have implications for improving the hiring process and mitigating bias. One Latina president noted she scrutinizes and addresses the composition of hiring committees to ensure there is some diverse representation (Muñoz, 2008).

Latino presidents engage in crusades that serve as counterstories, combating stereotypes internal and external stakeholders may have of their communities, while illuminating and reducing the oppression that exists in higher education (Ramos, 2008). When Latinos in these studies rose to the senior post at colleges and universities, they used their power and access to broader audiences to address inequities, working to achieve the change and justice that would better serve their communities.

Spiritual Capital: An Additional Cultural Asset

As a result of a study on Chicana undergraduate students, Huber (2009b) proposed an additional form of capital to the community-cultural-wealth framework: spiritual capital. Huber found that study participants possessed skills and resources resulting from “a spiritual connection to a reality greater than” themselves (Huber, 2009a, p. 721). Although none of the studies on Latino college presidents asserted the same conclusions, some of Ramos’s (2008) study participants recognized their calling to the work in higher education as spiritual, and identified themselves as spiritual warriors, working for the greater good of their institutions and communities. According to Ramos, religion served as a foundational support provided by some of her study participants’ families, which they translated into their work and care for their communities. Similarly, Avalos (2011) found that a sense of spirituality helped three Chicana college presidents make extreme sacrifices in their work, as well as overcome obstacles. Spirituality, for Latina/o leaders in the studies described above, encompassed values and learnings from their families that motivated them to use their roles in ways to support and enhance their communities.

In summary, in the literature review above, Latino administrators and other administrators of color experienced elements of traditional cultural and social capital to address barriers and obstacles. Although cultural issues emerged or were central to the studies on Latino college presidents, the cultural-wealth model was not applied as a theoretical approach. The findings, however, suggested that Latino college presidents use the six forms of capital in the cultural-wealth model and an emerging form of capital, spiritual capital, as they navigate in higher education, and these forms of capital provide them with the tools and skills to continue and thrive. As higher education seeks to prepare more Latinos for leadership roles, a better understanding of and regard for their cultural wealth may be pivotal to their success. Therefore, combined with the traditional concepts of social and cultural capital as the context of the higher education environment, cultural wealth may reveal a more complete picture of the experiences of Latino college and university presidents and the ways they endure and overcome challenges, while they make valuable contributions to colleges and universities.

Conceptual Framework: Presidential Success and Community Cultural Wealth

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework used in this study, supported by existing literature. As a group, Latino college leaders encounter barriers in the form of bias, isolation, or discrimination. In response, they use beliefs and approaches informed by their cultural upbringing and cultural values. Their cultural background and assets, or cultural wealth, help them overcome barriers in the form of traditional social and cultural capital, resulting in positive outcomes. Positive outcomes culminate in their advancement to leadership positions and their diverse perspectives in higher education.

Background + Barriers → Facilitators = Outcomes
Latino leaders + *encounter bias, isolation and discrimination* → *and respond with cultural assets* = *to achieve success*

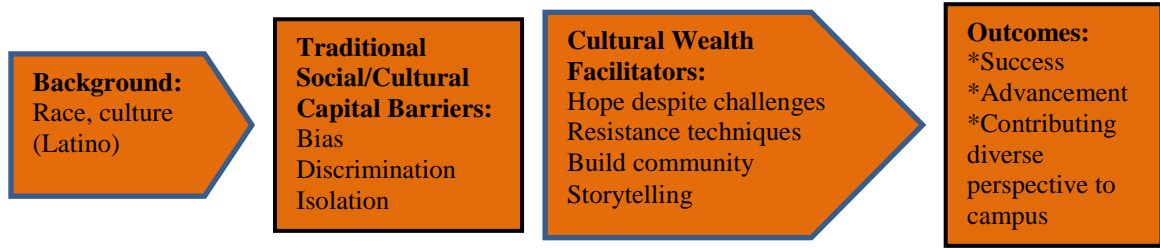


Figure 1. Community cultural wealth as a response to challenges.

The concept of community cultural wealth, with CRT as its foundation, was an appropriate conceptual framework to use in exploring the underrepresentation of Latinos in executive leadership because it emphasized the role of race and racism in how U.S. society functions, and provided clarity about the lived experiences of Latino college presidents (Russell, 1992). As a microcosm of larger society, higher education institutions reflect the values and behaviors present in that larger society. CRT addresses and challenges White privilege and the notion that educational institutions function in ways that treat everyone equally (Yosso, 2005). Moreover, CRT disputes the belief that research is neutral and instead reveals the ways research disregards the experiences and voices of people of color (Yosso, 2005). Although much of the research using a CRT framework has focused on high school students (Duncan, 2002; Fernandez, 2002; Teranishi, 2002), college students (Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998), and faculty (Delgado-Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Duncan, 2002; Tate, 1994), there is less research on the experiences of college administrators and college presidents using a CRT lens (Holmes, 2004; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008). In fact,

research on Latino college presidents, some of which have used a CRT lens, have uncovered information about Latino college presidential experiences that illustrate similarities between their experiences and those of faculty and students with respect to feelings of isolation or acts of resistance to inequities (Fernandez, 2002; Garcia, 2005; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Reyes, 2005; Teranishi, 2002). These findings suggest that people of color may have similar experiences in and responses to higher education environments, despite their distinctive roles.

Using a CRT lens, my research adds to existing research by exploring Latino college presidents' experiences, highlighting the cultural strengths and assets they bring to higher education, including those approaches that serve to address inequities. The cultural-wealth framework outlines a set of cultural assets that people of color possess and use in their lives. Yosso (2005) proposed application of this framework to students of color. In contrast, this research applied the cultural-wealth framework to Latino college presidents' experiences. Using a lens informed by the cultural-wealth framework helped uncover unique leadership qualities or approaches Latino college presidents possess and bring to their work on and off college campuses. Moreover, this study, based on the cultural-wealth framework ensured that the research approach modeled the kind of facilitators reflective of Latino college leaders' lived experiences in academia, and thus resulted in rich, comprehensive narratives about these assets. Although previous research on Latino college presidents focused on the barriers these leaders face in higher education, this research focused on the ways Latino college presidents used their cultural assets and strengths, or their cultural wealth, in ways that advanced their careers and their

causes. My study on Latino college presidents using the cultural-wealth framework, with its emphasis on the perspective, experiences, and strengths of people of color, honored the voices of these Latino leaders.

This study entailed qualitative methods, and particularly the use of *testimonios*, a form of narrative inquiry that seeks to reveal the lived experiences of marginalized groups in their own voices with an eye toward empowering members of those marginalized groups and helping change the oppressive conditions in which those groups live (Huber, 2009a). This research diverted from other studies, in that it was primarily strength-based and focused on the value of Latino presidents' cultural background to their roles in higher education. As a result, using a culturally relevant and respectful lens added to the literature by providing more detail about the cultural strengths that Latino college presidents incorporated into their professional lives to succeed and improve their institutions.

In the Association of the Study of Higher Education presidential address in 2006, Hurtado (2007) urged, "It is time to renew the promise of American higher education in advancing social progress, end America's discomfort with race and social difference, and deal directly with many of the issues of inequality present in everyday life" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 186). Increased focus on cultural wealth among higher education communities of color may be instrumental in achieving the social progress to which Hurtado referred. Much of the literature reviewed for this study cited the various ways Latinos and other administrators of color encountered their respective campus communities' inability to accept their differences and skills, and to support them as leaders. In response, leaders of

color used their cultural values and background as sources of strength and strategies as they endured and went beyond the limitations their communities tried to impose on them. The consistent presence and use of elements of cultural assets among Latino college and university presidents highlighted an essential focus of my research on these strengths.

As institutions begin to acknowledge and foster cultural wealth among their communities of color, institutions may not only contribute to the ascension and success of greater numbers of Latinos, but may also help to transform campuses into more welcoming and supportive environments. Further, as associations and networks look to prepare aspiring presidents, the role of cultural wealth may produce more success for college personnel and students of color. As Latino presidents noted, networking and training opportunities helped them to gain skills and connections that led to enhanced effectiveness and presidential posts (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005). Finally, as a community, higher education must answer the call to explore new ways to address longstanding issues that have marginalized some communities. Beginning with the strengths of those communities could not be more appropriate.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

The primary purpose of this study was to explore how Latino college presidents viewed and used their cultural background and cultural values to navigate systems in higher education to succeed in executive-level positions. Therefore, this study used a qualitative research approach. In this chapter, I describe my qualitative methods. Specifically, as a part of my research methods, *testimonios* revealed the stories of Latino college presidents in their own words, as they shared their experiences in higher education and the ways their culture impacted and contributed to their success. This chapter also includes a description of participant-selection procedures and recruitment, as well as data collection and analysis.

Research Paradigm

Using qualitative methods is appropriate in research that explores the meanings individuals construct from their experiences and contexts (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998). Specifically, I used the cultural-wealth framework, which encompasses all of the assets and resources or capital people of color bring as individuals to settings. Qualitative methods help uncover how two variables may be connected, or the process by which one variable may impact another (Maxwell, 2005). Although in previous research Latino college presidents discussed culture as a benefit and a liability in their work (Mata, 1997;

Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005), in this study I considered how Latino college presidents attributed their advancement and leadership approach to their cultural background. Specifically, I interviewed Latino college presidents to discuss their perspectives about the role of culture in their advancement.

As I connected with and interviewed Latino college presidents, my interactions with them were a critical part of the qualitative research process. The role of the researcher is central to qualitative research in that “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 1998; p. 7). During interviews, some Latino college presidents advised me about completing my dissertation or shared stories of their own dissertation topics and completion. All presidents spoke freely about their early influences and defining moments. Because the conceptual framework of this study was based on cultural wealth, the use of qualitative research methods was most appropriate, allowing for a free and open expression of perspectives and experiences. I acknowledged my critical role as part of the interpretation and sharing of stories, and valued the voice of research participants (Merriam, 1998; Yosso, 2005).

Strategy of Inquiry

This study used narrative to explore the lives of participants. Narrative emphasizes the phenomena of human experiences to reveal the details of an individual’s lived experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Moreover, using a narrative approach, the researcher has the ability to investigate the lives of individuals and retells those stories in the form of a narrative chronology (Creswell, 2009). Specifically, I used *testimonios*, a form of narrative inquiry that began in Latin American studies as a way to

expose the experiences and injustices endured by oppressed groups (Booker, 2002). Despite their leadership roles and authority, Latino college presidents experienced marginalization rooted in such factors as cultural misperceptions and their status as minorities in a community or on campus. Through *testimonios*, marginalized individuals told their lived experiences to raise awareness of racism, classism or other forms of oppression to effect change (Yudice, 1991). I was particularly drawn to *testimonios* because they are a narrative method that, created in Latin America, reflects and honors the experiences of Latinos.

In general, narratives are a reconstruction of the story of an individual from the individual's perspective, using the individual's language (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). *Testimonios*, however, take on a more political and empowering approach (Huber, 2009b; Yudice, 1991). Huber (2009b) asserted that *testimonios* and CRT, particularly, Latino CRT or Latino critical theory, were similar in philosophy and combining them would yield *testimonios* that affirmed the lived experiences of marginalized communities, due to their inclusive research process. Specifically, both *testimonios* and CRT value the inclusion of people of color in the research process. *Testimonios* and CRT are also based on individual narratives, representing the collective experience of communities. Further, each challenges the hegemonic premise of research and is focused on achieving social justice. Moreover, unlike hegemonic postmodern approaches that view the oppressed from a distance as "other," *testimonios* start with oppressed individuals and reflect these individuals' feelings and personal experiences (Yudice, 1991). Huber's (2009b) and Yudice's (1991) perspectives about the connections between *testimonios* and CRT

reinforce the connections I wanted to foster in study participants, as they also highlighted my strengths-based research approach that includes political implications.

With very little research on Latino college presidents and much of that research focused on their challenges or deficits in higher education, a sole focus on their strengths and successes challenged the notion that Latino college presidents are responsible for their lack of representation in executive leadership. Instead, *testimonios* as my research method stressed Latino presidents' assets and demands that the higher education community reflect on why these qualities are not consistently recognized or fostered. Finally, although my research methods focused on Latino college presidents' strengths, I used *testimonios* because I believed that those strengths emerged and were developed as a result of difficult circumstances. Specifically, as studies of Latino college presidents (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005) cited the bias, lack of support, and other challenges they faced, each leader appeared to have summoned the courage and developed the skills or perspective that helped them successfully address those difficulties. With the use of *testimonios*, I sought to uncover and better understand those responses and strengths.

In using *testimonios* in my research with Latino college presidents, I provided study participants with an opportunity to tell their stories. I then reflected their lived experiences in my dissertation. Latino college presidents have faced not just a shortage in numbers at higher education institutions in the United States, but also a lack of attention, as noted by the paucity of literature on their experiences. Compounding these deficiencies in the extant literature, Latinos often do not often have a local group of other

Latino peers with whom to exchange support. The interviews I conducted provided Latino college presidents with an opportunity to share, in their own words, their experiences in facing these challenges, as well as the ways their cultural background has impacted their careers in academia.

Research Design

Participant Selection

I selected participants using purposeful sampling. With purposeful sampling, the aim is to select participants who will provide the most information about the research problem (Creswell, 2009). In higher education institutions, a troubling trend has emerged in that presidents from underrepresented populations are clustered among the least resourced institutions. Specifically, Latinos are gaining the most presidencies in community colleges, whereas their representation in regional and research universities remains dismal (Haro & Lara, 2003). As a result, predominantly White, four year institutions have little representation of presidents of color with very few Latinos at the helm (Kirwan, 2008). At the time of this study, there were a total of 21 Latino college presidents at four year colleges and universities. With such a small number of Latino college presidents at four year institutions in the United States (not including Puerto Rico), interviewing these presidents at four year institutions served to provide insight as to what factors helped them achieve their executive positions, and how their cultural assets played a role in their professional advancement.

With no current directories of Latino college presidents available, the sample was identified using various methods. I initially identified Latino presidents who were

currently at four year public and private institutions in the fall of 2001 using information from a variety of sources, including the de los Santos and Vega (2008) study on Hispanic presidents and chancellors in 2006, which provided a list of all chancellors and presidents at 2- and four year institutions; a 2007 list of Latino college presidents provided by the Association of Hispanics in Higher Education; and the website for Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education (The Hispanic Outlook, 2008-2012) Hispanics On the Move webpage which lists appointments of Latino professionals to executive roles. I cross-checked each of these sources with college and university websites to ensure continuing presidential roles. A large number of presidents were no longer at their institutions. By conducting online research, I was able to locate presidents who had moved from one presidency to another or who had moved to other positions outside of higher education. This process resulted in the identification of 21 Latina/o presidents at four year public and private colleges and universities in the United States, not including Puerto Rico. Of these Latino college presidents, seven were women and 14 were men.

All 21 Latina/o presidents at four year institutions were contacted initially via e-mail with an invitation to participate in the study. One president immediately declined due to scheduled commitments. Another president, listed in the directories, notified me that he could not participate because he was not Latino. Of the remaining 19 presidents, three e-mailed me their interest in participating. I contacted the others via telephone and received commitment from 11 more to participate in my study. Therefore, the total number of Latino college presidents participating in this study was 14.

Data Collection

The primary source of data was in-depth interviews I conducted with each research participant. Although I had the initial intention to travel to all institutions, conducting a number of interviews during each trip, I quickly realized that each president's schedule was overflowing with commitments, and could be unpredictable due to unexpected events. For these reasons, I decided to schedule interviews at or during conferences and by telephone or videoconference, as Latino college presidents were available. My goal was to interview participants until saturation was reached or no new information emerged (Merriam, 1998). Although presidents experienced commonalities, there were also differences in their journeys. I interviewed all 14 presidents scheduled to participate in my study. To accommodate executive leaders' busy schedules, interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. I employed a semistructured, open-ended interview protocol based on the role of cultural wealth in the career experiences of Latino college presidents (see Appendix A). Interview questions included the following topics: (a) stories and perspectives on how cultural background manifested itself in participants' careers, (b) retelling of situations where participants navigated politics and overcame challenges in higher education, and (c) examples of how their cultural background informed their work as college presidents.

To prepare the interview instrument for this study, I tested it with two Latino senior administrators. Testing the instrument clarified interview questions and helped me identify potential probes. Follow-up questions or probes helped me explore potentially rich data during the interviews and provided opportunities for research participants to

expand on specific aspects of their experiences (Merriam, 1998). As a result of testing the questions, I refined the interview instrument to more effectively collect the targeted data.

Once Latino college presidents agreed to participate in the study, I sent them a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix B) to obtain data about their ethnic, educational, and professional background, to be returned to me before the interviews took place. All research participants signed a consent form in writing or verbally consented to have the interviews audiorecorded. For in-person interviews, I obtained written consent before the interview started. For telephone or videoconference interviews, participants gave verbal consent after they received an electronic consent form for their review. Before starting the interviews, I reviewed the consent form with research participants, asked them if they had any questions, and received their consent. Participants then engaged in interviews that asked them questions about their Latino background, values, and experiences; the influence of their families on their careers and perspectives; their support networks; and their responses to the challenges they faced in higher education. A professional transcriptionist transcribed the interviews I reviewed them for accuracy. Finally, as a part of the data-collection process, I shared the transcripts with participants for their review and to give them an opportunity to add any additional information they deemed appropriate.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data collected from interviews and other relevant documents began during the data-collection process. Merriam (1998) noted that this technique allows the researcher to keep the data focused, as well as to begin to process some of the

information collected. Further, engaging in both processes simultaneously, data collection and analysis, the researcher has more opportunities to deepen the exploration of the research topic and shape the research process by trying out questions on key informants or planning data collection in the next study-participant interview based on the previous study participant's interview findings, for example (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Deductive and inductive analysis. Using deductive analysis, researchers can find information to support an approach or framework from existing literature (Patton, 2002). Because the cultural-wealth framework served as the lens through which this research was collected and because I sought to identify the ways Latino college presidents used their cultural values in their work lives, I used the process of deductive analysis according to elements of the framework (Patton, 2002). This process assisted me in identifying potential themes related to Yosso's (2005) six forms of capital, to explore the data collected. Additionally, I used inductive analysis, such that themes emerged from the data, to identify ways Latino college presidents incorporated their cultures to express or develop each form of cultural-wealth capital (Patton, 2002; Yosso, 2005). As themes became apparent and I developed categories, I incorporated a data display to enhance the data-reduction process by providing a visual representation of potential connections among those themes (Huberman & Miles, 1983). Using the data display helped me begin to make sense of the information gathered by identifying themes or categories emerging from the data (Huberman & Miles, 1983).

Data display. Using visual representations of the data can help bring clarity or more understanding to the analysis (Merriam, 1998). Miles and Huberman (1983) noted

that data displays facilitate a better analysis of the data. Accordingly, as I reviewed the transcripts, I developed categories and began to develop a visual representation of how those categories interconnected. Similarities and differences among participants with regard to their expression or perceptions of culture were more visible using context charts, which helped me map out relationships between variables. Furthermore, sample content of each of the *testimonios* were displayed as they relate to identified themes, to reflect the voices and lived experiences of each Latino college president. Finally, in forming conclusions about the data and themes, a visual illustration, including content from the *testimonios*, assisted me in identifying the clear connections among ideas as well as those linkages that were less visible.

Identification of themes. I reviewed Interview transcripts multiple times to identify themes or trends (Merriam, 1998). After comparing those themes or trends to the elements of cultural wealth, I followed up through e-mail to gather additional information from participants, and to confirm the addition of any new information from research participants (Merriam, 1998). Once all data were gathered, I used the NVivo Qualitative Software Package to store, code, and analyze the data. After they were added to NVivo, transcripts were reviewed for the systematic identification of common themes among participant comments about their perspectives and lived experiences. None of the presidents added substantive information about their experiences. Yosso (2005) and Huber (2009b) argued that involving people of color in research about themselves and in creating knowledge about their lived experiences was a critical strategy in addressing their absence from previous research. In my research process, I not only wanted to

highlight the voices and lives of Latino college presidents, but also wanted them to interact with the data they provided about themselves and their lives. In this way I maintained the authenticity of the analysis.

Role of the Researcher

As a Latina college administrator, I have a vested interest in the success of students and of professionals of color in higher education. My background, experiences, and perspective can play an important role in my study because with narrative inquiry, the researcher becomes part of the construction and reconstruction of the narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In this study on Latino college presidents, my background as a Puerto Rican and first-generation college graduate had an impact on my rapport with research participants. I was able to relate to some of their experiences and had similar values to theirs, based on our shared cultural background. Although I was the youngest of eight children, I am the only one of my siblings to earn an undergraduate and graduate degree and to pursue a doctorate. My initial experiences in the higher education field were as the director of a partner organization that provided private liberal arts colleges with support in diversifying their campuses. In my role, I worked with presidents, administrators, faculty, staff members, and students to enhance their campus' receptiveness to diversity. The work was so rewarding I decided to pursue a career in higher education.

As a Latina administrator at a community college, I have attended a number of regional and statewide conferences and have been surprised and dismayed at the lack of Latinos present at these events. I became curious about why there were so few Latinos in

administrative posts. This curiosity grew into an interest about how Latinos who have risen to the top posts at their institutions were able to advance and succeed to those levels. While conducting this study I learned about how Latino executive leaders in higher education expressed and used their cultural values in ways that led institutional communities to support their advancement and leadership and contributed to the broader success of the institution. My interest in supporting other Latinos' advancement to administration and my own aspirations to become a college president have motivated me to learn from Latina/o presidential leaders about the ways they maintained their culture in a field that is still finding ways to value and support the diversity of approaches and perspectives that we, as Latinos, bring to higher education.

Although my background and experiences resulted in already having an initial understanding of Latino college presidents' use of their cultural values in their approach, I avoided making prejudgments on how they specifically expressed their culture (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). In fact, with *testimonios*, there is a departure from having the researcher "speaking" for study participants or acting as a gatekeeper (Yudice, 1991). In this form of qualitative research, study participants are active in defining their experiences and shaping the telling of stories of their lived experiences. Instead of being seen as an expert who would discover and reveal the findings of research on communities, I was seen as an interlocutor, engaging research participants in dialogue, and then retelling that story which had the goal of social justice as its foundation. Despite my use of *testimonios*, I was also sensitive to the impact of my contact with study participants. For example, Creswell (2009) noted that in qualitative research the

researcher has a sustained interaction with participants and this can potentially influence the qualitative-research process. However, although researchers should avoid forming preconceptions or making early judgments about the phenomenon observed, they also form judgments or are inspired while making observations (Patton, 2002). These judgments or observations should be acknowledged as a part of the research process, and their impact should be minimized by this awareness of their presence. Maxwell (2005) argued that ignoring or separating cultural background from the research process can cut researchers off from valuable insights or knowledge about a situation. Therefore, I did not make prejudgments of the data, and instead appreciated how my cultural similarities with participants helped in creating connections that enhanced my communication with them during the research process. The conversations were familiar: the presidents disclosed personal experiences and motivators as if I was a confidante, peer, and mentee. A few presidents encouraged me to complete my dissertation and a couple of them offered career advice. As I interviewed Latino college presidents, I engaged and attempted to build a rapport with them that allowed them to freely recount their experiences of success and the values they derived from their families and cultural background.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study had several limitations. First, this study was limited to Latino college presidents at four year institutions. Although there are a larger number of Latino college presidents at community colleges, for the reasons noted above, I chose to explore the experiences and commonalities of presidents at four year institutions to learn insights

unique to these institutions. As a result, although the findings may illuminate the commonality of the experiences of Latino college presidents at four year institutions, the findings are not generalizable to other postsecondary institutions. Further, the absence of an official directory of all Latino college presidents and the installation of new presidents after the interviews were conducted may have resulted in a failure to identify all existing Latino college presidents at four year institutions; thus, some may not have been invited to participate in the study. As noted earlier, I expected to interview all presidents in person; however, due to the presidents' schedules and the high cost of travel to each campus, I modified my plans and interviewed only five presidents in person, and one through videoconferencing. The remaining eight were interviewed by phone. Finally, this study focused on the connection to and expression of cultural values for Latino college presidents, using Yosso's (2005) cultural-wealth framework. Not all Latino college presidents had the same relationship to their cultural backgrounds or values; therefore, the findings provided limited information about the impact of culture on some Latino executive leaders.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

There was that little saying back in the '60s that came from one of the writers, where he said "Yo soy Joaquin, yo soy quien soy, no me 'parezco a nalguien." It's that sense that you are who you are and you operate at your base, and maybe all the cultural values are at work and you're not even aware of them, but you feel a very deep sense of security and you just march on and just don't dwell on that.

~Jose Garcia

I came to this topic of exploring the role of culture in Latino college presidents' professional lives, or rather this topic came to me, after another person of color felt unsupported because issues with her supervisor were unresolved, and left my institution of employment. I had a conversation with that colleague after she left. We talked about her departure from the college and the things she had learned because of her situation. She seemed resolved with having left, though she was disappointed with how the institution ineptly handled her personnel issues. She let me borrow a book, written by a White woman about work environments that were primarily dominated by White men. My friend told me that, in higher education, as in other fields, I needed to play the game by my own rules, not the rules of the majority population leading those institutions. She said that the book she had

given me to read had helped her see how she had to be strategic in her work and interactions, and how she, as a woman of color, had strengths she could use to affect outcomes.

Disappointed that yet another colleague and supporter of mine would no longer be working alongside me, helping to shift the oppressive culture of the college, I decided to read the book to see what it was about. I spent one afternoon reading, learning about myself, thinking about all of the professional environments I had experienced. Although there was room for me to succeed in those environments with the already established culture and rules at each workplace, somehow that level of success was limited, and somehow predetermined. Who was supported in those environments? Who was succeeding in those environments? Who was represented at all levels of these institutions? It was sobering to continually answer these questions with the response, “Not anyone that looks like or has a similar background to mine.” When I finished reading the book, I had an epiphany: if I didn’t start addressing these issues now, I was being complicit in limiting my own future, and the future of countless others.

I started thinking of the things I needed to know to better understand my next steps. What is it that we, as people of color, bring to the table that is unique? Why is our presence in increasingly diverse colleges and universities critical? Why do colleges have a hard time attracting, developing, and retaining people of color? As a Latina higher education administrator with aspirations to become a

president, I was unsure how I could overcome these barriers. As a result, I decided to talk to Latino college presidents to understand more about their journey and how their cultural backgrounds played a role in not only overcoming barriers, but also ascending to executive-leadership roles. I came to the conclusion that my aspirations in higher education meant nothing if I neglected to explore the answers to these questions first. I dove in to my new dissertation topic and I never looked back.

With this research I explored the cultural background and experiences of Latino college presidents that have guided their work and contributed to their success as administrators and leaders in higher education. Perhaps the unique thing about cultural values is that although they affect and guide one's approach to life and work, people are not always consciously aware of them. Some Latino college presidents in this study were keenly aware of how culture impacted their work. A few discussed that their values were so present for them in their lives that they chose to work at institutions that supported and fostered their cultural experiences and perspectives. Others noted that their leadership skills or the goals they set were very much about the hard work and struggles they saw their parents and family members endure. Overall, participants identified key cultural elements, and sometimes moments in their experiences that made an imprint on their lives.

I solicited all 21 current Latino presidents at four year colleges I was able to identify. Of the 21 Latino presidents, 14 agreed to participate in the study. Of the remaining seven presidents, one commented on the importance of my study though

declined to participate, citing schedule conflicts, and another noted he was not a Latino. The remaining five presidents did not respond to my requests for participation in the study.

Demographic Characteristics

Participants in this study self-reported information about gender, self-identification of their ethnicity and race, birth country, and generational status, as outlined in the demographics questionnaire (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1

Self-Reported Ethnicity and Race

Characteristic	Number reported	Percentage of total
Ethnicity (self-reported)		
Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a	7	50.0
Puerto Rican	2	14.3
Cuban	2	7.1
Spanish	1	7.1
Hispanic	1	7.1
Multiethnic	1	7.1
TOTAL	14	
Race (self-reported)		
White	11	78.6
African/African American	0	0.0
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0	0.0
Bi-racial	2	14.3
Unchecked	1	7.1
TOTAL	14	

Table 2

Birthplace and Generational Status in the United States

Characteristic	Number reported	Percentage of total
Birthplace Country		
U.S.	11	78.6
Cuba	1	7.1
Puerto Rico	1	7.1
Ecuador	1	7.1
TOTAL	14	
Generational status in the United States		
First generation (born in the United States parents born outside)	5	35.7
Second generation (born in the United States, parents born in the United States)	4	28.6
Third generation (born in the United States parent and grandparents in the United States)	3	21.4
Not applicable (born outside the United States)	2	14.3
TOTAL	14	

The generational status of research participants indicated whether they, their parents, or grandparents were born in the United States. Consistent with the number of male to female Latino presidents at the four year schools, most participants were men. Of the 14 participants, two were women. The majority of the participating Latino college presidents at four year colleges self-identified as being of Mexican descent, with four others identifying themselves as Puerto Rican or Cuban presidents. When asked, in the questionnaire, how they identified racially, 11 of the 14 presidents identified racially as White. Although 11 of the presidents were born in the United States, they varied with

respect to their generational status, with five identifying as first generation and a higher number of participants, seven, identified as second- or third-generation Americans.

Latino college presidents participating in this study were also asked about their educational background. In Table 3, I include information about study participants' K–12 educational experiences. Participants noted whether they attended private, public, or both types of educational institutions. Also included is information about where Latino college presidents attended schools.

Table 3

Educational Background

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
K–12 institution type		
Public	7	50.0
Private	5	35.7
Both	2	14.3
TOTAL	14	
K–12 institution location		
U.S.	11	78.6
U.S. and other location	3	21.4
Outside of U.S.	0	0.0
TOTAL	14	
Postsecondary location		
U.S.	13	92.9
U.S. and other location	1	7.1
Outside of U.S.	0	0.0
TOTAL	14	

Latino college presidents identified whether they were first-generation college students. Nine of the 14 participants reported they were the first in their families to go to college. Table 4 includes information about how study participants financed college, determined by whether they received financial assistance. Most Latino college presidents obtained their K–12 and postsecondary education in the United States. Of the nine first-generation college students, only four received financial aid.

Table 4

Financial Aid and Generational Status

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
Received financial aid for college		
Yes	6	42.9
No	8	57.1
TOTAL	14	
First-generation college student and financial aid		
Both first generation and received aid	4	28.6
First generation but did not receive aid	5	35.7
Not first generation but received aid	2	14.3
Not first generation and did not receive aid	3	21.4
TOTAL	14	

Latino college presidents in this study also provided information about their professional experiences. Table 5 includes the number of years study participants have worked in the field of higher education and the positions they have held.

Table 5

Years of Experience and Roles in Higher Education

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
Time in higher education		
20–25 years	4	28.6
26–30 years	0	0.0
31–35 years	5	35.7
35+ years	5	35.7
TOTAL	14	
First position in higher education		
Vice president	1	7.1
Faculty	4	28.6
Lecturer/instructor	2	14.3
Center director	1	7.1
Program codirector	1	7.1
Program developer	1	7.1
Academic advisor	1	7.1
Admissions counselor	1	7.1
post doc	1	7.1
Teaching assistant	1	7.1
TOTAL	14	
Position prior to presidency		
Provost	5	35.7
Vice president	3	21.4
Vice chancellor	2	14.3
Dean	1	7.1
Professor and administrator	1	7.1
Assistant dean	1	7.1
Deputy secretary	1	7.1
TOTAL	14	

The Latino college presidents in this study entered the higher education field in a variety of roles. Although presidents started their careers in instructional or faculty roles 43% of the time, the majority of presidents entered academia via other roles. However, garnering the chief-executive role for most of them required a senior-executive role, such as provost, vice president, or vice chancellor. Of the 14 presidents, 10 have been in the field of higher education for more than 30 years. The remaining four presidents have careers in higher education 21 to 25 years.

As a whole, these data provided a context for the stories of the presidents. First, the majority of Latino college presidents at four year colleges are men. Despite all 14 participants self-reporting their identities as of Latino descent, 11 of the presidents also reported their racial background as White. Some of these views about their identity might be related to study participants' place of birth. Whereas, half of study participants' parents were born outside of the United States, the majority of study participants, 11, were born in the United States. Socioeconomically, although the majority, 11, of the Latino college presidents in this study were first-generation college students, five did not receive financial aid, reflecting either the ability of their families to pay for college or their debt aversion, among potential reasons. Professionally, the pathways of Latino college presidents appeared to be consistent with those of typical U.S. college presidents. Although there was some variation in study participants' roles prior to the presidency, the majority of Latino college presidents in this study advanced to their current role from second-in-command posts of provost, vice chancellor, or vice president. Finally, a review of their institution's student body demographics revealed that half, 7, of the participants'

institutions were predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Six of the remaining institutions that were led by one of the Latino college presidents in this study were Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), with an undergraduate Latino-student enrollment of at least 25%. The last of the institutions was a minority-serving institution, and consisted of a student body that was at least 50% students of color. In sum, Latino presidents' self-reported ethnic and racial backgrounds, elements of their educational, socioeconomic, and professional backgrounds illuminate the range of characteristics and experiences of this subset of the population.

In Their Own Words: The Lived Experiences of Latino College Presidents

Each president had unique personal, educational, and professional experiences, but the role of *familia* emerged as a central influence on the skills they developed and who they became: the personality, the leader, the Latino college president. As study participants reflected on their experiences, they revealed the powerful impact families had on their careers. Although study participants reflected on familial capital in their experiences, which highlighted their value for community and family, the pivotal role of family in the development of all forms of capital is a finding I highlight in this section. Latino families not only taught their children lessons about how to be community-minded and fair, but also modeled the ability to accomplish difficult goals. With a sense of pride, Latino college presidents in this study recounted instances when they had learned specific values or approaches from their parents or families that guided their personal and professional lives. Because throughout their narratives study participants threaded their clarity about the role and place of family as teachers, supporters, and sources of

inspiration in developing their cultural values and skills, each subsection of this findings chapter includes excerpts from the Latino college presidents' *testimonios* during their interviews. Each excerpt exemplifies their collective stories about the role of growing up in a Latino family and community and how these experiences motivated and equipped them to develop skills and approaches that contributed to their professional success. To protect the confidentiality of the study participants, pseudonyms were used to represent each participant, and the individuals, communities, and institutions which they named during their interviews.

In this chapter, each section incorporates the strengths of Latino college presidents and includes aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and spiritual capital. Although there are six forms of capital in the community-cultural-wealth framework (Yosso, 2005), at the end of this section, I also present data that describes a seventh form of capital, spiritual capital, that emerged from the data of Latino College presidents' stories. To clarify the ways each research participant's *testimonio* exemplifies a cultural asset or strength, each subsection begins with a definition of that form of capital. Next, I provide a brief description of a Latino college president and the context in which they serve as president. Following the description of the president is a *testimonio* from that Latino college president that exemplifies the form of capital and the role of family as a source of each form of capital in their life. Each *testimonio* also includes other forms of capital, as these strengths often overlap with one another. Following this *testimonio* snapshot of a president, I present data from other participants in the study that reflect the use or presence of this form of capital.

Latino College Presidents' Cultural Assets

Aspirational Capital: Optimism Despite Challenges

Aspirational capital is the ability to see beyond obstacles and continue working toward one's goals; it is a strength delineated in the community-cultural-wealth framework (Yosso, 2005). Aspirational capital represents an individual's ability to maintain a sense of hope for the future, despite obstacles or the enormity of the change the person seeks. Although the presidents in this study had encountered challenges throughout their lives, they had maintained a sense of hope that helped them succeed and to surpass their own expectations. Parents and other family members of study participants served as sources of unwavering hope for the future, providing these Latino college presidents with a sense of unconditional support and strong bonds. These relationships with family resulted in study participants feeling confident in their skills and hopeful about their ability to effect change. Further, the challenges their parents and families had experienced in coming to the United States from other countries or facing language and cultural barriers served as a motivator to Latino college presidents who wanted to ensure that other generations of Latinos had more opportunities and fewer obstacles than their families might have experienced. Their aspirational capital provided them with impetus or focus to reach the goals and dreams they had for their future and the future of their community. In sum, Latino college presidents' circumstances, parents, and experiences inspired their drive and hopes for the future.

Jose Garcia's *testimonio* illustrates some qualities of aspirational capital and the role his family played in his development of this asset. Jose, whose higher education

career spans 25 years, is president at Retention University, a small, public, HSI in the Western United States. As a second-generation Mexican American, Jose was initially inspired by the accomplishments of his parents and his community, which was predominantly Latino. By witnessing the leadership and persistence of his parents and other Latinos in his community and getting encouragement from his family, Jose came to believe that anything was possible. Jose's *testimonio* reveals the ways his culture and family helped shape his view of himself and what he could accomplish. Through these individuals and experiences, Jose developed a sense of fearlessness about the unknown or the challenging. Although this aspirational capital is reflected in the experiences Jose recounted, the presence of other forms of capital also strengthened his ability to reach beyond the challenges to meet them with success. When asked about elements of growing up in his family that stand out to him, Jose highlighted his family's influence on his regard for education:

My mother was a teacher. In those days in [the Southwest], you did not need a 4-year college degree to teach. What you did is you went to college for a short term and got a certificate. So when she started raising a family, she taught. Then she had a larger family and she didn't teach. Then she taught when we all had left the house. My father was a visionary. He always talked to us about making sure that we moved to the next level because he was a rancher and a farmer and ranching and farming was not becoming a very profitable kind of endeavor by that time, even though he did fairly well. The next generation, it was clear to him that that was not going to happen. So that was clearly an influence. There was no question

in my mind that education was my first priority up to and including a terminal degree. So we all went off to school and we all took on different careers.

When you're brought up on a ranch and farm, you're taught since a very early age to be self-sufficient, number one, and secondly, that there's no job you can't do. You just have to set your mind to do it. Examples of that, of course was my father building a homestead, building a house in the middle of nowhere in the middle of the homestead, digging a well for water. I mean, all of these examples. [He was] doing engineering feats without having been an engineer, from building parts for a windmill, for example. There just wasn't anything—and he never left us with the impression that there wasn't anything in the world that we couldn't do or become if we just wished, number one, and secondly, [if] we were willing to work hard enough to get it. Then, my mother, in a different way, had the same values, especially after she became primarily a homemaker. She could sew anything. She could do any kind of indoor work that was done in those days. She was more an indoor person than outdoors but she could make anything that she set her mind to it. So in summary, my whole background was built around my parents' view of the world that you make your own place and if somebody puts you down, you just get up, dust yourself up, and you go at it again. I think another dimension to that was that we were taught that we were not necessarily better than anybody else, but we certainly were equal to everybody from every walk of life. My father never felt second to [anyone] and those values [of self-sufficiency,

confidence in one's ability to get things done, and a strong work ethic] attached to it. As we grew up, that's the way we behaved in the world.

I think the [family] support [has impacted my career path and ascension to the presidency]. There's a deep sense of security when you come from a strong family, if I had chosen to do this or something else—I started out to become an engineer, for example—and when I told mom, especially, that that's not what I was interested in after a year, and I shifted over, I always had a deep sense of security that whatever I tried, my family was going to be with me. As a matter of fact, as the years went by and you get all these different awards, my family was always there to celebrate my successes along with me, as I was for the rest of my brothers and sisters as they were experiencing their own successes. Anyway, the point being, when you have a close family tie like that, you never feel you're alone. You never feel like there's anything you can't try and actually accomplish, and if you fail for a moment, they'll be there to pick you up

I can honestly say I never started out to be president of a university. I just started out knowing that I was going to be successful at whatever I tried because I didn't have an alternative. My parents never felt that they should impart to us the notion that you can't succeed at whatever. They were my first mentors, in every sense of the word, and the values, of course, had to do with the work ethic again, with the notion that you can do anything you want, and with the notion of almost being fearless, not in a reckless way but in a way of not being afraid of adventure, not being afraid to do something new, not being afraid to meet new people, create

extensive networks. So I always felt in command from the first job I was ever exposed to. It just felt like a natural fit. I knew that in order to progress up the ladder, I had to work hard, and harder than anybody else.

The first (challenging) experience I had, at least in more recent times—not recent dates, but recent times—is when I came to Retention University. This was a very, I wouldn't say is segregated school, but it has a very small Hispanic element at the senior leadership. I was probably the first [Latino administrator] of any note. I was put in that unit where I was recruited into [it] by the then president and it was clear to me that people didn't value me to the extent that I knew I brought value. So I just kept taking assignments that I figured I would take the initiative, and I would say within 6 months of having been there, the director would not make a move without involving me in the meetings because I would write up the findings. I started a whole record system. I started implementing a whole set of administrative procedures. It was not a huge unit and there were probably \$25 million base budget for that whole unit. So just by taking the initiative, doing things that you saw needed to be done and learning how not to intimidate people, but making them see for themselves the worth and value that you bring to the setting, after a while they just don't want to do without you because it makes their life so much easier. I made a lot of correct decisions along the way that they could see the merits of my decision as opposed to some other recommendation. So I only lasted there ... not even quite 2 years before they recruited me to become vice president. That's, I think the most dramatic example

of what I saw that, by doing the things that my parents had taught me, again, that things would work out fine.

I came to a university where, when I got appointed [to the presidency 19 years ago], 67 faculty and scientists signed a petition asking me not to accept the job. I just thought they were silly and I had my first faculty council meeting and I told them, “The Constitution of [this state] doesn’t give you the authority to appoint the president. The board appointed me, and I intend to be here, and we’ll see if we can work together.” Within very short order—obviously, I’ve had support, otherwise I wouldn’t be here 19 years. So, yeah. You should never be afraid to speak your mind. Try to be as honest as you possibly can about how you really are or what you feel and not try to put make believe barriers in front of you.

For Jose, his ability and will to move beyond challenges were the result of the sense of self and confidence that he gained from his early experiences with his family. His parents not only modeled for Jose their own confidence in their ability to accomplish their goals, but also pushed him to believe in his own ability to shape his future. Their value of education was also a critical point of support for Jose and his siblings, all of whom also pursued higher education. As a result of his parents’ influence and his upbringing, Jose did not hesitate to take on new challenges and experiences in his education or career; at the same time that he was clear about the value he added to each setting. When he encountered unsupportive colleagues at one institution, for example, Jose focused his attention and energies on what he could do to improve the work of the department and eventually his persistence earned his supervisors’ and colleagues’

support. Later on as a president, Jose's tenacity and confidence were also crucial factors in his success as he contested his faculty's initial opposition to his appointment as president. Subsequently, Jose was able to transform that opposition to support and has enjoyed a long tenure as president. As a result of his self-assurance and resolve, Jose not only persevered in different professional environments, but was also able to turn situations around and garner a significant amount of support that has contributed to his success. In conclusion, as Jose met with difficulties in his professional roles, he confronted them with ingenuity, confidence, and a positive outlook that turned each situation around, and in these ways, expressed his aspirational capital.

Similar to Jose, other study participants derived their sense of hope for the future from their families' values and support. Presidents in this study attributed their passion for education and educational access to their families' commitment to ensuring that they received a good education. Specifically, Lorena talked about her dedication being inspired by "a debt that I owe to my family because of the strong convictions and dreams that they had for me about education." Other study participants, who were first-generation college students, believed it was their duty to take advantage of educational opportunities that their parents did not have available.

Despite the ways in which parents transmitted their value of education, study participants consistently received the message that education was important not only for them as individuals, but also for their community. Further, presidents in this study did not stop at admiring the benefits of pursuing education; they believed they had a role in ensuring their community's access to educational opportunities and success. Pedro's

parents communicated this message of self-sufficiency and responsibility to Pedro because they “did not want [him] to echo their lives in terms of economic circumstances and mobility, and always gave [him] a sense of the need to really take it upon [himself] to improve.” Parental support went beyond their interest in their children’s education as they also taught their children critical values. Many Latino college presidents credited their parents and families with helping them develop resilience, a strong work ethic, and ingenuity to address challenges. With these skills, study participants addressed and overcame obstacles while garnering support from others. Still other study participants credited their confidence, resilience, and ability to take risks to having strong family bonds and support. To sum, study participants consistently reported the variety of ways their families helped them develop the qualities and skills they needed to thrive in difficult circumstances.

Focusing on the Possibilities

Just as their families were a dependable source of assets for Latino college presidents in this study, their professional environments also consistently provided them with challenges in which to use those strengths. As Latino college presidents entered the workforce, the concept of hope became evident as they held onto a vision of improvement for their campuses and for the field of higher education, despite consistent reminders that the road to improvement was a long one. Like Jose, when other presidents in this study faced negative assumptions about their skills or ability to do their jobs, they took them in stride, finding direct and indirect ways to overcome the criticism or lack of support. Luis recalled an incident that occurred during a job interview for an associate

vice president position in which the interviewer inferred Luis lacked qualifications for the job:

I remember when I applied to this job at a California state college. I was interviewing and somebody asked me the question, “How or what are you going to do not to ruin the academic standards of our institution?” And I’m saying, “Excuse me?” You’re basically telling me, “You’re unqualified. You’re going to ruin our institution if you come here, but tell me how you’re going to avoid that.” To me, things like that are challenging. I know what I know and I know that I can achieve at a very high level, and it’s challenges like that that make me more interested in continuing to improve myself. And I think it’s those challenges that have kept me moving forward.

Although Luis acknowledged the challenge of hearing the negative assumption about his potential impact on the institution, he was also clear about his belief in his abilities to work through the challenges he faced. Furthermore, he used those difficult experiences as a motivator to continue on his professional path. With this clear sense of self, he diverted his energy away from the negativity and instead, focused on improving himself. Similarly, when Andres, a college president from Network University, was targeted by the media, he did not question himself or his critics; instead, he concentrated on doing his work:

So yes, when I was appointed, somebody wrote an editorial in the newspaper about [the idea that] they appointed me because I was Latino. That was the only reason that they chose this guy, because he’s Hispanic. I couldn’t reply to that.

The only thing I can do is do my work. Ten years later, I'm still doing my work and I think it has been fairly successful. So you just prove people wrong. You just do your things. Keep doing it.

Like other presidents in this study, Andres' confidence in his abilities as an executive leader provided him the confidence he needed to withstand the challenges he experienced. Moreover, it was this quality and perspective that helped Andres focus on using his skills to do his job well. Other study participants overcame a lack of institutional support by remaining steadfast in their efforts to make their institutions more accessible, affordable, and welcoming. As a collective, study participants wanted their institutions to be "the great equalizers" in providing all students access to a quality education through dual-enrollment programs, high-quality advising programs, or developmental education. Some presidents also focused on curriculum and hiring practices as ways they could enhance the diversity of their institutions. As Clarissa recalled her efforts to start a dual-enrollment program, she spoke passionately about her wishes to truly provide access to students who might not otherwise come to her campus:

My legacy will be ... that I protected access. What happened was that in my second year, I realized that my legacy, I didn't want it to be improving Partnership University. We're in the top 100. We're the only state college in the state that's in the Top 100 in (national news magazine). We have very good standards. We're in *Princeton Review*. We're in *Best Colleges to Work For*. We have a lot—it's very hard to get into Partnership University. We have 10 applications for every seat. So it is an elite institution in many ways, but I never

wanted it to be an elitist institution. I always tell the faculty we can be elite without being elitist.

So in my third year, I started thinking about what the dilemma really was and the dilemma was that the faculty had set such great standards that most poor kids couldn't get in because they couldn't meet that standard. I couldn't change the standard because the faculty had the right to set that standard. As a faculty member, I would tell you a president must protect the rights of the faculty to do that. You want high standards; otherwise all the institutions would be mediocre.

I thought a lot about that and I said, "When my kids bury me in the ground, when they put my casket in the ground, what do I want to be remembered by?" And the answer was very crisp and clear: that I protected access; that I was able to find a way to bring kids to higher education that otherwise might not come.

Although faced with the formidable endeavor of increasing educational access at her institution, Clarissa did not back down, but instead remained dedicated to her vision. She did not view faculty-set standards as an obstacle to admitting and retaining certain students, but instead saw the value in and worked within the parameters of those standards to realize her goals. Much like Clarissa, Diego wanted to improve higher education institutions and the opportunities for diverse students and knew that he could only achieve those changes as an administrator. Diego decided to go into administration because it was clear that those leadership roles had the power to effect changes on a campus:

One important key, the reason that I became an administrator, that I moved into the presidency—when I took the job with the president as his assistant, what motivated me there, I don't think it's a rationality, but I realized that when I was a faculty member, I worked with students one-on-one. I had students that did research with me. We published. I was also teaching at a professional school part time just for the fun of it. So I had a lot of doctoral students with me, as well, and some Latinos. I realized that within higher ed, if you really want to make a difference, you've got to control the resources because that's what it all comes down to.

The faculty, at your level, your advisor and stuff, yeah you can work with students one-on-one, but if you really want to make a big difference, if you want to recruit students, if you want to change the curriculum, you've got to control the resources, because if you don't, you'll never be able to do it. People complain about not having enough Latino faculty. Well, those decisions are made at the faculty level, not at the administrative level. You've got to get through the barriers that they put up. One of the ways that you can do that is if you have control of the purse-strings, you can apply pressure. That's what you see throughout higher ed, more and more Latino faculty, more women, and part of that is just the carrot and the stick. You've got to nudge people in the right direction. That's why I decided—when I went into administration, I said, “Look. If I'm in that position, I can do a lot more for students and faculty than if I'm a faculty member working one-on-one, one person at a time.”

As chief executive, Diego has worked toward broader institutional change by focusing on two key components of the higher education experience: its curriculum and faculty. Like other presidents participating in this study, Diego forged ahead, believing he could impact the status quo, and thereby reverse the trend that has continued to keep campuses from reflecting, fostering, and supporting diversity. Finally, with a sense of what the future of institutions could be and a commitment to taking them there, Latino college presidents in this study have worked toward and often accomplished their daunting goals.

Familial Capital: The Strength of Family

As Jose's *testimonio* illustrates, parents and family members were instrumental in Latino college presidents' lives. As a result of their familial experiences, study participants not only gained a sense of hope for the future despite the challenges they faced, but also experienced the unwavering support and loyalty of family. Latino college presidents shared that their approach to working with others was influenced by their strong and close relationships with family members. This section explores how study participants transferred their value of family to their careers.

The president of Scholarship University, a private, religious PWI, Jacinto Trujillo revealed his complicated connection to his family and culture. Although he was very close to his parents, he recalled a disconnection from his cultural background, which was shaped by his father's determination to provide his son with the advantage of knowing English at the expense of not learning Spanish. His parents would not speak Spanish in front of Jacinto and this resulted in Jacinto feeling distanced from his cultural

background. Yet, despite not having a stronger connection to his heritage, Jacinto reflected, in his *testimonio* below, on the ways his parents and family reinforced and manifested the concept of family, and thereby translated the essence of his culture.

I often talk and write about the fact that it was my name more than any single thing that tied me to my culture because my father really understood that the language of wealth and the language of power in America was English. So while he was learning English, he never spoke a word of Spanish in the house to myself or any of my siblings, only to his brothers or sisters when they visited or to his mom and dad. I really felt the disconnect between my name and my heritage as Hispanic American and the culture in which I was living. And so I really felt a disconnect with my own culture. I go so far as to say I felt some shame at being a Jacinto because I didn't have my father's beautiful dark skin, and his exotic accent, and all of the ethnographic markers, if you will. So in many ways, I eschewed my own culture and longed to be anything but my name, Jacinto Trujillo.

More than any single thing, my family instilled in me this deep belief that we are tied together. They instilled in me this belief that there is something of our blood culture together that says that we will stand together. Whatever the consequences are we will not abandon one another. Family ties, everything from the family meal, which is something both of my parents were fairly vigilant about, we never missed a family meal; we were always together for that time. It was a time of sharing. It was a time of incredible joy. Those are the values that we

continue to foster: family and beliefs in supporting one another as family. It is something that we continue to foster within our nuclear family and then our extended family beyond that. I don't think it's endemic just to my experience, but I felt as though I grew up with 100 *tias* and *tios*, and for me, I was probably 15 or 20 years old before I realized that these were not blood relations. I called them uncle or aunt but they were family.

I think there was another deep value that was instilled in me: to see the other, a person as a family member, this idea, that really is a very deep Western belief in the interconnectiveness of man, is something that my family imparted to me. Whether it was subliminal or overt, I think it was both, but that was certainly one of those things that was true. I think there's a resiliency that's part of a cultural connection I have. [Consequently,] I sense that in the academic community there are so many structures that one has to navigate through that you can easily find these as divisions within a school. They're often called that, a division of this or a division of that. To me, nothing inhibits and impedes progress more like divisiveness. There's a unity that has to come and I think that's a deep cultural value that Latinos have and I certainly have, that we will tear down walls because we are *familia*. At some level, we have to operate from that mindset.

Through my father's music, my father was a Latin musician, and through connections to music and family and food and so many of these cultural connections that I had, I retained a connection to my culture. [However,] it wasn't until coming into the community college system in [a western U.S. city], of all

places that I really felt almost a renaissance of that cultural impact in my own life because all of the Latino students were coming to my classes. And why were they coming? They were coming to my classes because they saw my last name in the college catalog. They saw Trujillo. They came and they said, “We thought because of your last name there would be a connection and you would understand something of our own experience.” I studied Marti’s work as any Cuban nationalist would, and knew something of anyone that wrote drama who was of Hispanic origin. I studied Cervantes and others but really didn’t teach it until that time at the community college level. I also began teaching Latin American literature. This more fully exposed me to not only a culture that I had known and yet had felt some detachment from, but also this rebirth that I was experiencing [inspired me to begin] working on a number of levels on leadership opportunities, especially for Latin American men, in this greater cultural milieu. For me, during this time, I began rediscovering what it meant to be Latino and many of the struggles my students had experienced. I see myself coming full circle with my own name being an attractor for Latino student to come to me and to think that the name I felt distanced me from my own culture was something that was attracting them and me back to that culture. That was 28 years or so ago. From that point forward I have been much more intentional and so grateful for the ways in which my students helped me rediscover and emphasize what I know to be a central part of who I am.

[As a result of my experiences,] what I see in terms of my own leadership responsibility is my responsibility to help Latino students, students of all backgrounds, but I feel a special obligation and tie and responsibility and privilege, frankly, to help Latino students understand their place in American society and their own roots, and how their culture speaks to their experience. So again, I think the way being Latino and understanding what it means to be Latino today in all of those ways, I tell people about the fact that I probably don't have the respect for personal space that people from other cultures may have because I will often invade it because it is something that I know for me, part of being Latino is wanting something tactile, wanting a connection that is beyond some sort of electronic connection. The virtual doesn't mean nearly as much as the personal. I think that is part of being Latino. At least it has been in my experience. It is understanding the impact of food and dance and music and cultural activities and family and faith, and those other things as well. I feel as though I have been able to fully incorporate that in the way I approach leadership. The way I approach curricular opportunities, the way I approach diversity and my understanding of what that truly means, I think are all influenced by my understanding of Latino as well.

[Finally,] one of the things that you would find if you tracked my career, I came into administration late in my career and that was a very clear choice based upon our commitment to family. We knew what the demands would be of an administrative position. It basically has a time demand that would be prohibitive

in terms of our ability to connect with our children, attending things like ballet recitals, baseball games, piano recitals, or connecting with their teachers at parent–teacher conferences. Things along those lines were so precious to us that we talked very openly about opportunities that existed for us and we made many decisions, frankly, that were family first, that maybe limited my career choices at that point. I think beyond that we always approached our next opportunity in terms of the way we connected with an institution along lines that understood this deep familial connection. Not only was it a way for us to say we will look at opportunities that will allow our family to stay connected, but also I think it helped us understand and interpret the institution along familial lines. I think we always felt that if there was not a way for us to connect with an institution along those lines, to see your coworkers, in a sense, as family, with understanding the appropriate boundaries, then we would not be interested in a position like that.

Jacinto’s recollections of his family experiences highlight the broad impact that his parents and relatives had on how he views communities, how he works with others, and how he has made career decisions. With familial capital, it is not only one’s connection to family that is present, but also the extension of that bond and commitment to community and others in one’s community. His parents’ vigilance about spending time with their children communicated their value for him and their time together. The presence of cultural experiences that included music and food also emphasized for Jacinto different facets of what it meant to be Latino. This connection to culture and to his family shaped how he perceives others, and even systems in higher education. As he

reflected on the concept of family in his life, he recognized that his value for connectedness and unity in institutions was informed and inspired by his own relationships with his *familia*. He spoke powerfully about the Latino cultural value for unity and how that intersects with and challenges the nature and structure of higher education institutions. Moreover, the leadership and supportive relationships he developed with his students exemplified the sense of obligation he felt to support these members of his “extended family,” to ensure that they succeeded. Finally, in this snapshot, the impact of family on Jacinto is reflected in many aspects of his life, which include his self-concept, his relationships, his leadership approach, and his commitments to others.

Much like Jacinto’s experiences, the enduring value of the Latino family was communicated by other presidents in this study as having provided them with the security, support, and example that shaped their lives and success. Eduardo, for example, emphasized that his family experiences not only impacted how he interacts with his community, but are also central to how he defines being Latino: “Being Latino means to me that I have a value structure that really is focused on family and it has provided a foundation for how I approach my job and how I approach people I interact with.”

Eduardo’s perspective was shared by the other 13 Latino college presidents participating in this study. Family was central to study participants as children, and continued to play a key role in the way they approached their personal and professional lives as Latino college presidents. Hector, for example, noted that his family’s loyalty and

support helped him feel confident and secure, and this greater sense of self helped him in making decisions:

Because of heavy reliance on the family, your anchor in the family, you don't need this adulation or approval from other people. You don't seek that sense of approval and adulation from outside because you know you get that, but in an honest form, from your family. No matter how good or how bad you are, you are going to always have that family support and family backing you up, even if you are wrong, or not as right as you should be, but you have that anchor in the family. You don't need to have deep anchors in other areas and seek approval by some others. You can always count on your family.

For Hector, the sense of security that he felt from his family's support helped keep him from external influences in making decisions and instead allowed him to make decisions based on his values and what was best for his institution. This constant presence of family resulted in close-knit relationships. Presidents communicated that their families were close. As Jacinto's testimonio revealed, experiences with family reflected the importance of family time and togetherness. The impact of this example continued into their adult lives. Latinos in this study experienced the caring, closeness, and support of their parents and siblings as consistent aspects of their familial experiences and continues as they seek it in their communities and on their campuses. Specifically, Pedro reflected on the depth and impact of this love for family:

I find that Latino families really not only talk about it but they also live it in a very real sense. We tend to be at our best when we're with each other. I think

that's a very critical feature. We tend to rally around the sense of family in a way that others groups don't.

As he talked about the bonds of Latino families, Pedro also highlighted the joy that family members experience in being with each other and how these positive experiences continue to draw family members together. Latino college presidents in this study took this perspective of family and connection beyond their nuclear and extended families to Latino communities and their campuses. These experiences as children and as young adults in their nuclear families and their communities left an indelible mark that they carry today. Of the 14 Latino presidents in this study, 13 shared that they transferred this view of family to their university communities and neighboring cities and towns. In effect, presidents revealed that there were times in their lives when they were part of or created a sense of *familia* among their colleagues and students. As an undergraduate, Pedro met many peers and faculty with whom he became close; since he graduated from college, 15 of them have reunited for Thanksgiving. For Diego, these experiences of creating *familia* in the university occurred during a time when the Chicano studies department at his institution was in its early years.

The concept of the family within the university was really tight when I was at Innovation University, it was really tight because they had Chicano studies and they had a core group of people and we were all mixed together. We all knew each other and we worked together. So the concept of family within the university was very important, too, because we did consider ourselves ... *familia*.

Sharing a similar background and common goals in the same department helped Diego and his colleagues develop and strengthen their relationships as well as a sense of family. Evoking and fostering a similar environment, Andres said that he focuses on creating a sense of family with his colleagues and campus community:

I try to bring that to the way that I deal with my own cabinet and with my own university. I try to make sure that we are like a family and I use the word family many times when I meet with students and with parents. ... I always welcome them to the Network University family.

Andres consistently conveys his value of creating a trusting and caring environment to his coworkers, students, and their families. He believes creating this sense of family helps his recruitment of Latino and African American students, because these families are “very strong on family values and being close-knit.” Although some presidents sought to shift the culture of their institutions to be more family centered, other presidents sought institutions that already reflected this value for families. For Cesar and his wife, positions that reflect their value of family have always been a priority:

Just to reemphasize the idea of never taking a job simply because of a career opportunity, we always saw this deeper connection in that there was an opportunity to connect as family, even in the workplace. So I think we always felt that if there was not a way for us to connect with an institution along those lines, to see your coworkers in a sense, as family, with understanding the appropriate boundaries, then we would not be interested in a position like that. I hope that

makes sense. But I really feel that our *familia* value is so deep that we see even in our occupational connections; it's linked to family.

That was another reason that I took the position here at Community University because I never had been to a place, especially an institution of higher education, where the *familia* model was used as a strategy to make students, to help students feel comfortable, engage them and personalize the experience, all in unison with the faculty to feel like I did when I was with my parents and my uncles, and so forth, that we're all in this together and we're going to work things through, because we're trying to achieve here being a mission-driven university for Latinos is not an easy task. There's no magical formula.

Cesar is so deeply committed to maintaining his experience of family, that he and his wife have prioritized this value in selecting work environments. His current institution has mastered the ability to create the types of relationships among staff and with students that reflects the support and care of familial relationships. For Lorena, whose (HSI) is still evolving into a more family-centered institution, the concept of *familia* in the institution feels like a reachable goal. She declared her commitment to creating an environment that reflects qualities to which her Latino students and families will respond and she explained how she was helping to transform her institution's processes and interactions to be more sensitive to families' needs.

We see everything through the filters of family. ... I think it has helped me to really raise the level of awareness at the university about how we need to look critically at the organization and work processes and personal interactions to see

how that aligns with Latino students and their families. We're doing that now. We're taking what used to be our Office of Mexican American Studies and changing it from what was an ethnic awareness that we are trying to build with that program in the 1960s, to one of organizational development, which is, how do we help faculty and staff understand the impact of culture, which includes family and faith and all of that, into our work processes and structurings, and the way in which we interact with families.

Although Lorena's institution may have many Latino students, comprising 54% of the student-body population, its protocols and processes are still not reflective of Latino students' needs or the needs of their families. Lorena believes that creating a more culturally responsive institution will help create the environment that will ensure more Latino-student success.

Although culturally sensitive protocols and mechanisms in higher education may take time to change or implement, Latino college presidents use their culturally influenced approach to shape the feel of their campuses. In talking about how her views on family impact her connections to the Latino community on campus, Clarissa discussed how her experiences and perspective have influenced her interactions.

I think it has [impacted my connection with the community] because I connect with the people in the community in a maternalistic way. In other words, not that I'm condescending or in any way diminishing their role, but I'm very affectionate. I like the community whether they're White, Black, or Hispanic. I enjoy meeting

with them and their families. I always remember people's names and if they have children, they tell me about their children. I ask them about their families.

Expressing her care for and attention to the families of her students and staff members, Clarissa recognizes the importance of families to her campus community. These interactions result in an environment that welcomes and values the loved ones of those with whom she works and acknowledges their key role as support systems.

For Latino college presidents participating in this study, family experiences and connections were such a critical influence on their own sense of security and belonging that they sought to recreate those bonds and support systems on their campus communities. Study participants felt a sense of responsibility to help their campuses enhance their sense of community and support of everyone on campus. Whether connecting with their students from diverse backgrounds or developing protocols and processes that reflected the cultural value of family, Latino presidents aimed to shift the traditional culture and feel of their institutions to be more interconnected and cohesive. As a result of their early experiences with their families, Latino college presidents valued *la familia* as an unwavering source of strength for them and their communities, and it was a quality they strove to bring to and foster on their campuses. One way participants brought this sense of *familia* to their campuses was through their ability to relate to others.

Linguistic Capital: Connecting Through Language, Stories, and Approach.

As families helped study participants develop their resilience, appreciation for familial bonds, and other strengths, they did so using varied communication skills. Latino

college presidents in this study not only learned from those different types of communication, but also adopted them as their own. Because communication skills are critical for individuals in executive roles to relay messages to employees, galvanize support and, generally, to lead institutions effectively, this was another asset that added to study participants' professional success. Latino college presidents in this study showed exceptional communication abilities in many areas that, according to the community-cultural-wealth framework, are considered linguistic forms of capital. Not only did some presidents use their ability to speak Spanish to communicate with Spanish-speaking populations, but they also used their skills to connect with a range of communities in accomplishing their institution's goals. Moreover, participants in this study expressed a commitment to a range of experiences and communities, inspired by their own ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Eduardo Ruiz, for example, started his career as an instructor and has spent over 40 years in higher education. He is the president of Pathways University, a large, diverse, public HSI in a western U.S. state. Eduardo's value of community building is reflected in his leadership and communication styles. His ability to communicate the broader needs of his institution to engender the trust of others has garnered him support among faculty members and donors. Further, his own experience and sensitivity to others' concerns and perspectives have motivated him to appreciate looking at issues from a variety of perspectives while also creating avenues for others to contribute. Finally, Eduardo understands that speaking Spanish to Latino students and staff creates a sense of confidence and connection with those community members; therefore, he seeks out these

opportunities to interact. While he credits his family background and his value of family with his approachability and community-minded leadership, he identified specific ways each has impacted his communication skills.

Growing up in my family was a really good enriching experience. I was raised in a Spanish-speaking household. My father worked as a sheriff, a legislator, and then ended his professional career as a judge. The thing that stood out most in growing up was my father's philosophy that he inculcated into all of his children that you have to do what you say you are going to do, even if it is wrong, because a person's word is their honor. That meant a great deal to me as I was growing up because I had a cousin, as an example, that was pretty wild, and over a period of 8 years, had eight brand new cars and totaled all eight of them. He didn't die in any of them, so he stuck around, but I can remember one day coming into breakfast and my father told my mother, and I listened. He said, "You can work an entire lifetime to build some respect for your name and it only takes one day to tear that down." That had a significant impact on me and the values that I have as far as making sure that I don't do anything that reflects poorly on my family, whether it's my immediate family or, of course, the family I've created since I was married and raised children.

Another value I learned from my family was around doing things that enhance your reputation by being good to people—my father never met a stranger. He would come home all the time with people that he saw on the side of the street that were hitchhiking to town; he'd pull over to say, "Have you had

anything to eat? No? Well, come on. Let's go have lunch," and he'd bring them to the house. My mother was extremely sensitive about all those kinds of things and very supportive of what he did. I think there's probably a lot of religion in those values about being good to people. Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you is probably a very strong philosophy in my home that I grew up with, as well as being honest and the notion of having strong ethics that were indisputable. These things really anchor what I do and how I do it here at the university.

Being Latino means to me that I have a value structure that really is focused on family and it has provided the foundation for how I approach my job and how I approach the people I interact with. Here, at my institution and at previous institutions, I spent a lot of time doing what I call building community, and I have found it to be quite successful as a mechanism for being able to implement change because people trust you as a member of the family and in that building of community. I really do think it helps you move the institution forward, and people align themselves in terms of changes that have to be made much easier than when you don't have that kind of a structure and that kind of a value system. I care about what's happening to people, and they know that.

In this current [budget crisis] situation in our state, for example, I set up an ombudsman office here on campus so that people would have a place to go to find out how they could resolve issues. In my view, it reduced the number of grievances that were filed because they had someone to interact with and reach solutions when the problems were minor and were not the type that required an

extensive grievance process. It also provided an outlet for people to voice their concerns about what was happening to them and how the institution could respond to that. I tell this story only to say that given the budget crisis in this state, I always get a monthly report from the ombudsperson that tells me in general terms the things she's addressing with the people she is seeing. I expected there to be a lot of concern about the people coming in to talk to her about losing their jobs, and that conversation hasn't happened. This illustrates that people know that I'm working to ensure that I keep as many people employed as possible. It's one of my priorities. I tell them this. They believe me. So I think it has to do with that whole concept of building community, and building community and family is the value that I think being Latino brings into the equation as president.

I believe my cultural values are an asset constantly because I don't look at things the way most people do. I have experiences that others may not have if they're in the majority, and if you look at the number of presidents in the United States that are Latino, you'll find that I am still in the minority in that regard, and so I look at issues and challenges that we face from a slightly different perspective because of my own background and my own upbringing. I see that as something that's always positive, because the more you can look at an issue from a variety of stands, the better the resolution is going to be to that issue. I also think that for better or worse, God gave me the gift of gab so that I can talk to people. I can talk in front of people and I can deliver the message in a fairly—I'm not going to say succinct ... but I think that I have the ability to create the same level of trust in

individuals outside of the university that are prospective donors, if you will, and that level of trust has resulted in a significant number of contributions to the university because I'm effective at pairing up what I see as people's interest with what their capabilities are in terms of funding. It really does have an impact on how the external community views the university.

Consequently, when I was serving as provost at [another institution], I was so effective in working with the faculty senate that they altered their bylaws so that I could have a vote on the executive counsel of the academic senate. It was because they knew that, number one, I had integrity, number two, I was honest, and number three, I wouldn't make a suggestion or wouldn't do something that would go counter to our views of what the mission of the university was. So that was a perfect example of how you utilize the values that you bring in to inculcate a sense of trust with individuals that you have to work with, and I do that regularly.

At another institution, there was a Latino roundtable [in the community] that had a history of cornering university administrators and slamming them for not doing enough for the Latino population. When they invited me to their meeting, I went to see them and I said, "You know, this is a great organization that you put together, but you're focusing on the wrong things." I said, "You're focusing on what's happening at the university with regard to hiring, and we have good reasons why the hiring practice is what it is, and it's not always because we're not making an effort. But what you need to be focusing more of your

energy on is what you can do to encourage more Latinos into higher education, to prepare people to get into the pipeline so that this problem isn't something that is ongoing." So I converted them all from being the group that was hollering at the university for not doing enough to the group that was trying to create opportunities to generate revenue to support student scholarships, to the group where when we brought Latino faculty candidates in, they would host them for an evening and show them the Latino community in the area. In other words, we utilized their strengths rather than focus on the issues where we weren't getting enough in return.

I'm definitely not bicultural. I'm Latino. I'm a Mexican American. I'm a Chicano, 100% of that, but I am bilingual and it contributes to my work in a number of different ways. When I talked about creating community here, it is amazing the good will and the trust that you engender—I do a lot of walking around campus. I do a lot of just going here, there, and everywhere on the campus, and when I talk to a custodian that's Latino, I talk to them in Spanish. When I talk to parents of a student who's been coming to the university that are Latino, and I speak to them in Spanish, it's a whole different level of pride, if you will, that they have in knowing that the president of the university is not only Latino, but speaks Spanish, too. It's just amazing and it happens in a number of different venues. We have a large population of Latinos engaged in every major on campus. At commencement, they bring everybody. They bring *madres*, *padres*, *abuelos*, *tios*, *tias*; everybody comes. So having the opportunity to interact

with them and congratulate them on a level for their accomplishments, but at the same time talk to their families and talk about *el apoyo*, that they've been giving them and the success they've had and all of these things, I think it's very positive. I think the ability to do that is unique in many ways because there are not that many of us that can in the country. I think that has a great deal to do with how the surrounding community sees the university as a place that their children can come and that their children will be taken care of because there's somebody here that understands them.

With a range of communication skills, Eduardo has effectively strengthened the level of trust his personnel and community members have in him, he has built diverse alliances and relationships, and subsequently, has expanded his scope of influence. With over one third of the student population identifying as Latino at his institution, Eduardo used his ability to communicate to move his agenda forward, from speaking Spanish to connect to staff members and Latino families, to raising awareness about the experience of language-minority populations, or to openly challenging potential community partners to strengthen their relationship to his institution. His unique perspective and skill in communicating his views has created allies instead of adversaries because he has combined his persuasiveness with his value of community building. As he has advocated for issues dear to him and his community, others have realized his sincerity in their well-being. In sum, it was Eduardo's communication skills, interwoven with his cultural values, that generated his strengths in communication or his linguistic capital.

Similar to Eduardo's experiences, other presidents noted a variety of communication skills they used to be effective in their work. With these skills, study participants were able to reach across cultures and perspectives to develop influential partnerships and succeed in their work. The following section explores three communication skills that Latino college presidents highlighted as strengths in their lives and work and that exemplify linguistic capital: language, storytelling, and the ability to relate to diverse communities. Using these skills, Latino college presidents in this study lead their institutional processes and institutions in an inclusive, collaborative environment.

Language. One of the ways most presidents in this study felt they added value to their campuses was in their ability to speak Spanish. Of the 14 presidents, 11 were at least bilingual and spoke Spanish. One president spoke French, Portuguese, Spanish, and English. Although the fundamental role of family in developing this skill may be obvious, not all parents of study participants chose to support their children's learning of their native language. Four presidents, Jacinto, Jorge, Raul, and Ruben did not learn to speak Spanish as children. Their parents felt it was more important for their children to have an advantage by learning English, and because of this, discouraged the learning of Spanish at home. Because Spanish was not spoken in schools, Jorge said his parents did not speak Spanish in his presence. Like Jorge, Jacinto's parents prioritized him learning English at the expense of learning Spanish. Jacinto not learning Spanish also contributed to his feeling disconnected from his Latino background. Although he has found ways to connect to Latino students and communities in ways other than language, other

presidents, like Jacinto, still long for improved mastery of the language to strengthen their connections with their community. In contrast, those presidents who learned Spanish as children described being bilingual as closely linked to their identity as Latinos. The ability to speak Spanish was prized by most presidents in this study as an important facet of their communication skills. For others, knowing Spanish was a critical way to reach out to others in the Latino community, including students, parents, and faculty, especially at PWIs. Clarissa talked about language as a way she identifies herself. “I identify as Hispanic, as Puerto Rican actually, not even Hispanic. I have that strong identity. I speak Spanish when I see people who can speak Spanish. I feel very comfortable speaking Spanish.”

With a minority of her campus being Latino, Clarissa was especially sensitive to identifying herself and connecting with those students and staff who shared her background. She disclosed that some of her peers wondered out loud why she would want to be the president of a PWI instead of a more diverse institution. Her response to those peers was that a Latina president is just as needed by majority and minority students at an institution with less diversity because she could be a role model, increase the understanding of Latinos and Latino culture through interactions and dialogue, and, provide support to both populations on campus. As president of a minority-serving institution, that is about 20% Latino, Diego, had a different story to tell. Because his mother did not speak Spanish when he was growing up, he admitted that his Spanish-speaking abilities are not strong. Despite this, he has deliberately sought opportunities to keep up his Spanish.

To this day, my wife and I, as a respite from the stuff that I have to do all day, we'll watch some of the novellas for two things, just because of the story line, but the other, just to keep our Spanish up as well.

Diego places high value on remaining connected to his culture by keeping up his Spanish. Despite the limited opportunities to speak Spanish at work, he beamed as he talked about his ability to connect with the landscaping and maintenance staff members on campus, who speak Spanish and who appreciate him, as the campus leader, communicating with them.

The grounds people, a lot of them are Latino, and I can speak to them in Spanish and I say hello to them. I think that's one of the things people like most about me, as a person is hey, I come from that background so I'm not just going to go by you and go to my office like the president. We're going to chat. We talk and I ask them how their families are and talk about different things. It's been a real, real advantage for me in California to be able to do that at that level.

When speaking to his institution's facilities' staff members in Spanish, Diego relates with these staff members because of their mutual Latino background. Similarly, Raul reflected on this ability to connect with other Latinos in their native language and recognized that the Latino community expects a Latino president to speak Spanish and appreciates when they also know something about popular Spanish culture.

I think it's one thing if you're Hispanic and don't speak Spanish, it's very hard. If you're going to a Latino community, they expect you to speak Spanish to them.

So even if you struggle with it, you'd better try to say something and you're going

to be asked about Univision or Telemundo—you better know that. You don't have to be fluent. You at least have to speak enough. People care about your thoughts. I speak Spanish pretty well. There's always times that I stop to think of a word, but cultural experiences help me relate to the families and they help the families relate to me.

Raul pointed out the importance of non-Spanish speakers to at least attempt to communicate in Spanish because communicating in their native tongue is such a big part of many Latino's experience and identity. Speaking in Spanish to individuals, families, and groups that come to their campuses is an added pressure and expectation for Latino presidents, just as it is an opportunity to connect with a population that might not feel at home on a college campus. In fact, one president lamented that not speaking Spanish might limit his overall connections to the Latino community or effectiveness as a Latino president because he would not be able to fully connect with a key sector of his campus, local community and stakeholders who were native Spanish speakers.

Moreover, Latino presidents emphasized practical and strategic reasons for speaking Spanish to members of their campus and local communities. This language ability created opportunities for presidents to relate to communities who might not see college as a possibility or who might not usually get or expect attention from the president. Pedro talked about how opening up his conversation with parents and other groups in Spanish puts a "smile on their faces" and "breaks down barriers." Luis uses his ability to speak Spanish to put parents and students at ease and give them a sense of encouragement about exploring the possibility of college.

I go to meetings with Latino parents and I use my bilingual nature to do that. I think it gives me a better understanding, being bilingual, of the need to encourage kids to keep their native languages, or for nonnative speakers to obtain a second language because I think it's going to help them. The only, I guess, time that I use the bicultural piece is in trying to relate to other underrepresented groups so that they understand that I have some level of understanding with the needs that they have and the supports that we need to provide their children or kids at the university level.

With his bilingual skills, Luis not only connects to underrepresented communities but also communicates his understanding of their concerns and needs with respect to going to college. Comparably, Diego talked proudly about his ability to connect with facilities staff who are Spanish speaking and often-overlooked employees.

In fact, around here, some of the grounds people were speaking in Spanish. That doesn't happen. I can talk with that person and understand from their position what they're going through I think much better than other folks can because I was the first ... to go to college.

As a result of reaching out to his institution's grounds staff members in Spanish, Diego is able to fully communicate with them and to understand their experiences. Although most presidents touted their Spanish-speaking abilities as key to bonding with and supporting underrepresented students and their families, one study participant felt differently. Jose, who is bilingual and leads a southwestern institution that is designated as both a PWI and an HSI, revealed his contrasting view of his ability to speak Spanish.

I am bilingual. To me ... going back to my family, where you grow up speaking English and Spanish, and some people would claim Spanglish, but I think my command of the Spanish language is better than that, but anyway, I just don't have a feel for [speaking Spanish], that it was a major part of my life.

With consistent exposure to English and Spanish in his predominantly Latino community and as a second-generation Latino, Jose felt that knowing or using Spanish did not have a powerful influence in his life. Jose recognized that he had the support he needed in his diverse community and that he did not experience barriers that he attributed to being Latino, and this, in some ways, eliminated the need for him to seek support through speaking his native language or through being vocal about his cultural background. In sum, despite the diverse perspectives and experiences of Latino college presidents participating in this study, a majority highlighted the skill and value of being able to speak Spanish as an asset to their careers and their campus communities.

Our *cuentos*. Although speaking the Spanish language was a key communication skill that most Latino college presidents in this study used to reach out to others, study participants often shared their experiences through stories to communicate with others. As they related their lived experiences and views to others, Latino college presidents in this study expressed their passion, vision, and influences. Further, it was through storytelling that study participants not only connected with others, but also engaged with and effectively persuaded and inspired others. In effect, as a communication skill, storytelling allowed Latino college presidents to develop and strengthen relationships with others in ways that helped them achieve their goals.

Clarissa, who is currently the president of a public institution that is also a PWI, has been in the field of higher education for 35 years. As she spoke of her leadership and working style, she recognized that, during conflicts, she seldom raises her voice. As she reflected about how she developed this style, she recalled her father's usually calm disposition during conflicts with her when she was a teenager. Below, Clarissa describes a specific encounter with her father when she came home late one night during a period when she was a college student.

My father is like that [calm]. ... I think that's probably where I got it. I remember once coming home very late and it was almost breakfast time. He got up at 5:00, so I must have been coming home at 5:30 or something, and he came into the kitchen as I was trying to sneak in. I was in college then. I don't know why he was home. He sat down with coffee and I didn't know what to do, and he said, "Sit down." I said, "What?" He said to me, "All I want to know is, what could a good girl possibly be doing out at this time of night?" without raising his voice. And I said to him, "Well, I went dancing." I told him what I went to do. But he didn't say "you're a bad girl." He said, "tell me what a good girl does," meaning I know that you're a good person. I know you're not doing—but tell me what you do.

Clarissa admitted that her father's reaction drove the point home, despite his not yelling at her. As a result, her interactions with others often reflected a similar demeanor such that she would try to reason with or ask questions of others who did not agree with

her, instead of being confrontational. She has found this method to be effective for her in dealing with conflicts with colleagues.

In revealing the quality of integrity as a central value he first learned from his father, Cesar told me about his trip to the store with his brother and father in which the cashier gave him the wrong amount of change.

I was maybe 11 [years old], and we were going to that little ranch on a Saturday and my dad gave me \$10 and he said, “Go in and buy your brother and you some—at that time it was an RC Cola and some chips, or whatever. I went in there and gave the lady—I got the stuff and gave her the \$10 and she gave me change for a 20. And I went back into the truck and I was so happy because I had more money than when I went in, plus I had the goods. My dad started the truck and started driving to the ranch and we were out about two miles and I told him, “Hey, Dad”—in Spanish, of course, I told him—”I gave that lady a \$10 and she gave me change for a \$20. Look, I have more money now.” And he just looked at me like—I mean, just stopped in his tracks. He pulled the truck over and he counted the money and then he turned the truck around and went back to that little whatever it was—Circle K or 7-11—and he says, “You go in there and you tell that lady that you gave her a \$10 and not a \$20.” That’s what he told me. So I went in. I didn’t want to because I thought I had a little cash here. So I went in there and I gave it to her and she was so happy that I went back and did the right thing. So when I got back in the truck, you know, my dad was quiet and I was kind of like, “Oh, I wish I could have kept that money” He said, “Cesar—Cesar,

esa mujer puede perder su trabajo por eso” He said, “You don’t ever operate that way. *Tu no puedes ... tienes siempre tienes que portate bien y honesto.*” So he taught me values of honesty and integrity.

In telling the story, Cesar effectively communicated how he learned the lesson through his father’s sternness and clear message that the cashier could have lost her job had Cesar not done the right thing. Stories of their experiences as children revealed the ways in which study participants developed their values and approaches; stories of their experiences as professional uncovered the ways in which their backgrounds shaped their perspectives, interactions, and decisions. Latino college presidents participating in this study talked about how sharing their personal experiences helped them meet their goals as chief executives of institutions. For Ruben, a campus program in which families would learn about the college process and receive information was also a venue for him to motivate families, in part, by sharing his experiences.

The families would come and I would very much tell them some bits of the story that I’ve been telling you about how important education was in my family in order to encourage those students and to tell those students that they had every opportunity that my family, my father and his family had, and that they could be just as successful as they were.

As a result of Ruben’s encouragement, he believed that more students and families became comfortable with his campus and with the view that they were a part of the campus community. Whereas Ruben and other presidents reflected on how their collective stories connected them to their communities, other presidents like Jacinto, who

leads a religious institution, used storytelling as a way to build alliances and increase understanding across communities. In his professional career, similar to the experiences of other presidents in this study, Jacinto endured negative assumptions about his abilities. He reflected on his efforts to quell stereotypes by helping people get to know him better.

I think that it is clear that some of those biases have led to some difficulties. I think more than anything, when people get to know who you are—I think it's one of the most important reasons we need to tell our stories and tell them better as Latinos is because of various stereotypes ... and I think working in the South for the first time in my life has helped me to understand how somebody's cultural biases continue to present themselves.

Jacinto's response to bias has been to engage and tell others about himself through stories of his experiences. He found this strategy to be not only effective in reducing tensions with others, but also helpful in his own understanding of bias in others. Consequently, through this approach he has been able to build bridges that have increased his and his institution's base of support.

As Latino college presidents shared their experiences and lessons, they enhanced their ability to reach out to others. Revealing information about their background and influencers assisted presidents in creating familiarity with their audiences and engendering empathy. Finally, storytelling was not only useful for presidents in this study to make stronger connections with others, but it was also instrumental in helping them bring themselves more fully into their work.

Enhanced ability to relate to diverse communities. Complementing their abilities to tell stories and speak Spanish was Latino presidents' strengths in communicating and connecting across different groups. As they talked about their value of diversity and the ways they felt connected to underrepresented groups on campus and in their communities, Latino presidents shared how they came to be more accepting of others who did not share their backgrounds. The neighborhood or environment in which they grew up was essential to developing these skills. As presidents' grew up in diverse or homogenous communities, they learned to communicate with and support others while also appreciating different traditions and cultures. As a result of their backgrounds and family experiences, 12 of 14 presidents saw themselves as bicultural, multicultural, or of mixed culture, as reported in their questionnaires or during interviews. The remaining two presidents identified as either Puerto Rican or Mexican. The manner in which Latino college presidents identified themselves reflected the cultural experiences to which they were exposed, either at home or in their communities. These experiences not only raised their awareness of differences, but also appear to have influenced their ability to relate to and desire to support various campus communities. As they told stories about their lives and experiences, all study participants had the ability to connect across individuals and communities.

For Jacinto, growing up as a Latino in the United States expanded his perspective and knowledge of two different experiences. Being part of two cultures felt to him like a bridge connecting the two different parts of himself.

I do see myself as bicultural and bilingual and I often talk about my cultural mess, if you will, really being an asset. I didn't always see it that way, but I think one of these ideas of bi-text, and you've heard this sort of discussion often, the way we hyphenate our very lives, this idea that as a Cuban-American or a Hispanic-American, or a Latino-American, that that hyphen serves almost as a dagger in some contexts. I see it more as a bridge between those two cultures, and I guess it gives me an advantage because people talk about globalization and cross-cultural communication and all of these things and, well, I've lived it.

Jacinto's dual backgrounds increased his understanding of cross-cultural experiences and interactions and, in this way, support his success in diverse communities. Just as Jacinto's ability to relate to others resulted from his environment, Pedro also discussed how living in a primarily African American neighborhood shaped his appreciation of cultural backgrounds, including his own.

It's interesting in that I was raised in an African American community. We were the only Puerto Rican family in the neighborhood and area that I grew up in. So it became very clear to me that I was very different from those around me that I was growing up with. So I appreciated the differences in the foods and the traditions, certainly in the fact that I spoke a language that others did not, and again, we're talking generations ago, so the issue of speaking a different language back then was a much greater differentiator than it is today. So I gained an appreciation for the fact that difference made me unique, made me different, but that the difference was one that I was willing to nurture and cherish, and I think take

advantage of in terms of my own development. I really wanted to understand who I was, relative to the community that I was in.

Pedro's acceptance of the differences he saw in his neighbors also inspired him to value the differences that he brought to his community. Moreover, as a Puerto Rican, being of Taino Indian, African, and Spanish cultures, Pedro also viewed his ethnic roots as a unifying influence. He reflected on the implication of growing up with this mixed background.

Coming from that background, I think, has given me a perspective that perhaps others haven't had, and given that the Latino community is, of course, the fastest growing one in this country, I think we can sort of show the rest of the world what it's like to live in a multicultural, pluralistic society.

Coupled with his experiences in his neighborhood, Pedro's belief that his ethnic background can be a model of multiculturalism further emphasizes his comfort with and acceptance of people of different backgrounds. Because he was able to appreciate the benefits of the diversity in his own background, Pedro was also able to appreciate how his experience could serve a purpose in his diverse campus and society. Similarly, Cesar viewed his Latino background as a cultural lens that has shaped his experiences, attitudes, and values in ways that have benefitted him and the institutions with which he's worked.

[Being] Latino is looking through the lens of an experience and also—yeah, I guess that's what I would say, looking through the lens of an experience. Growing up Latino, being around Latinos, my family life tremendously influenced how I approach things, the kind of attitude and values that helped me to progress and to

take on the challenges. ... I think that people that have seen me as I've developed, have seen that I have skills, both cultural and linguistic skills, that have met a demand of those institutions and that have continued all the way here to [this college].

His unique perspective and background have proven invaluable to Cesar in his development as a multicultural leader and have also been useful to the institutions in which he has built his career. Likewise, other Latino presidents noted that their cultural and racial backgrounds and experiences served to help them and their institutions connect to others and meet their goals. As they recounted their relationships with the campus and external communities, their value for individuals of various levels and backgrounds, as well as their successful interactions with them, were among the strengths that Latino presidents added to their environments. Andres noted the continuing benefits of being exposed to other cultures.

I think it is really important to learn about other cultures, other traditions, other things. They give you a perspective on things. In my case, coming into an area that is heavily Hispanic, it certainly has been important as an asset to learn and to develop, to work with the community, to communicate with the parents, with students.

His cultural experiences and learning from others of different backgrounds have assisted Andres as he has sought to inform and work with students and their families. Many other Latino presidents in this study felt similarly to Andres, in that they valued the stories, experiences, and strengths that other communities brought to their campuses. As

he reflected on his ability to communicate and connect with diverse populations, Hector also noted his sensitivity to interactions and nuances in those interactions that people of different backgrounds bring to a setting.

I am able to listen to different voices and to nuances in different voices because of being multicultural and multilingual and I think sometimes those nuances are—no matter what language you are, etc., being aware of those things is pretty important to get behind the façade and to see what really is going on, and I think those sensitivities because of your multiculturalism, multilingualism, help you understand things better and get to what the real issues are and not be as distracted as much by the façade but look at what is behind the façade.

Hector drew from his multicultural background and experiences to more effectively listen to and communicate with others. He credits this sensitivity with helping him see through the niceties of interactions and instead identify the underlying problems that may be present. Finally, as presidents recalled their multicultural experiences they recognized the cultural skills and awareness they had developed, which contributed to their ability to communicate and respond well to others.

Due to their ability to create welcoming and comfortable environments for multicultural communities, Latino college presidents saw themselves as part of different communities. Clarissa's interest in other cultures has led her to develop a close relationship with Turkish students and their families near her institution. In return, Turkish students invited her to go to Turkey with their cultural attaché, and she and her husband accompanied them. She said she learned a lot and shared how she is "sensitive to

other cultures” and how she “feels very comfortable around them.” When she sees these students, she often asks about their families and continues her connection to them.

Similarly, Raul discussed his ability to work with others associated with his campus community. “I think also in terms of my connectivity to the community, my ability to work with donors, my ease at dealing with people, all that comes out of experience. But also, the kind of person I am.”

For Raul and other presidents, the dual role of managing relationships with students and the community as well as with donors were strengths that moved their careers and institutions forward. Similarly, Jorge talked about his experiences in church with his family and how that helped him develop his own biculturalism, which facilitates his communication with others to provide support for his institution.

Predominantly, my life in church—all my life as a kid I’ve been in church, and even as an older man now, and predominantly been around Anglo churches. So that’s my biculturalism right there. They’re definitely an asset to me now at this institution, being able to lead this school and being in front of people who I’m trying to help, predominantly Anglo people who are trying to connect with this school. So it’s an asset of me helping them understand the cross-cultural values of training students to be cross-cultural leaders in the world, and live in a global world that we live in today.

Through his personal experiences with his congregation, Jorge was able to develop his knowledge of the Anglo community and use this awareness to move his institution forward and provide leadership to students. Connecting with the variety of

populations and stakeholders at an institution is a key skill for any president. For the Latino college presidents in this study, however, this skill was a strength they developed as a result of their background, and that they enjoyed as leaders of their campuses. Presidents continued to appreciate the multiple benefits of being able to communicate effectively with diverse students, personnel, and community members, including donors, to enhance their campus environments and successes.

Social Capital: Relationships and Networking for Self-Development and Career Success

As noted earlier, Latino college presidents face environments and challenges that can make it difficult for them to accomplish their work, and more, to succeed. Having support from others has been critical to the Latino college presidents' ability to overcome obstacles and to identify unique leadership opportunities. Supportive networks were present for study participants early in their families and communities. Latino college presidents in this study recalled significant human resources, or social capital, in their lives that led to comprehensive professional development and support, as well as excellent career opportunities. With the presence of these guides and motivators, and developing their own communities of supports, Latino presidents shared the various ways they harness their social capital.

Cesar Perez became the president of a small, private institution in a western U.S. state after being mentored by his predecessor when he served in an administrator role. Cesar was drawn to the HSI because of its emphasis on operating in a culturally sensitive way. Along his educational and career path, Cesar noted the critical role of the many

mentors he met. He noted that his upbringing, and particularly his relationship with his parents, encouraged him to be a good listener and to be open to learning from other people. It is with this openness to others that encouraged Cesar to befriend many people who committed themselves to helping him get to the next level.

I never really, in my wildest dreams, [thought] I'd be a college president, however I did go to college after high school, wanting to be a teacher. And then I went on to get my master's and wanted to be a principal, met some folks there, and I wanted then to be a professor like my professors at my college where I was in the master's program. So I continued on that educational path, not really knowing or pursuing any kind of real big leadership role, but I've always liked to be involved and I've always felt like it's kind of an obligation to be the best educated person you could be, because my mother and father didn't have those opportunities. So I always pushed myself.

Being Latino is looking through the lens of an experience. Growing up Latino, being around Latinos, my family life tremendously influenced how I approach things, the kind of attitude and values that helped me to progress and take on the challenges. That whole idea of family really impacted me in terms of always listening for advice and having support systems around me and support systems to make sure that I was progressing. I grew up in my nuclear family and then I grew up in my extended family and the extended family was like a nuclear family ... my Tio Miguel or my Tio Estefan, on and on and on. They weren't overly involved with us. I mean my dad didn't believe in having daily meetings

with them or hanging out with them, but if they ever saw me somewhere doing something, they'd come up and tell me or—at church, they'd come up and talk to me. So the whole idea of “it takes a village to raise a family,” it really does. And you have your nuclear family and extended family and the community supports those families, and traditionally, like where I come from in [the southwestern United States], those families have deep roots. It's just something that has always existed. People practice it very strongly.

I always tell the story about my Tio Miguel who fought in World War I and he would come to all my graduations and my first graduation obviously was high school and then my BA and every time, he'd ask me the same question. So he'd always ask me, “*Que vas hacer ahora?*” I would always tell him “*Voy estudiar mas.*” So at every graduation he'd ask the same thing. Finally in my doctoral program, he was up in age and he asked me, “*Cuando vas acabar el doctorado, terminar el doctorado?*” I said, “*No, Tio me falta.*” He always had this sense of urgency for me to finish. Finally, one time he got so frustrated with me he said, “*Cuando vas a terminar tu doctorado.*” And I said, “*No, me falta tio.*” And he said, “*Quiero que me operas mi cataratas.*” He wanted me to operate on his cataracts. And I tried to explain to him that I was a doctorate in education and I was going to be working and training teachers, and he was kind of deaf because he was up in age. So my Tia Juanita told him “*Miguel, no es doctor de verdad.*” So even though my family didn't understand what I was going through, they were always very supportive.

So that was another reason I took the position here at the Community University because I had never been to a place, especially an institution of higher education, where the *familia* model was used as a strategy to make students, to help students feel comfortable, engage them and personalize the experience, all in unison with the faculty and other people on the campus. So that's one of our strengths here at our university, that we do create the *familia* model and I want these students and faculty to feel like I did when I was with my parents and my uncles, and so forth, that we're all in this together and we're going to work things through, because what we're trying to achieve here, being a mission-driven university for Latinos, is not an easy task. There's no magical formula. It's just like my dad with me. It's just hard work to teach and to work, and to guide and to educate.

Teachers, professors, and administrators I met along the way made up my support systems. I think another time was just coincidental that in ninth grade, when I became a ninth grader, the middle school principal, Mr. Thompson, asked me to come back and work with him to take a group of kids on a field trip to a lake so they could go fishing; and these were all the troubled kids, the ones that were creating problems for him in the school. I just remember getting onto the bus and I saw a lot of kids there and some of them were my cousins and I asked them, "What are you guys doing here?" They told me, "Well we got in trouble here." I realized then, these guys need guidance. Here I am, only a ninth grader, and I know those kids need guidance. So I just volunteered at that school site a little bit

more and the kids knew me, and it was an opportunity for me to see, hey, I think I can be a pretty good teacher. And that was only in the ninth grade.

These guys [my mentors] just took time to talk to me and encourage me. In fact, when I finished my first master's in educational administration, I was driving with Omar Castillo [my professor]. I became real close to him and we were driving back and forth to Colorado where he was from, and one day I told him about the doctoral program at Affordable State at the University of Affordability. He said, "What's holding you back from applying?" I said, "I don't know. I'm thinking of staying here for a second master's." I was comfortable there in North Hills, Arizona and he said, "Get out a piece of paper and here's what I want you to write. I, Cesar Perez, hereby declare myself a candidate for the doctoral program at Affordable State University." And he said, "I want you to write a few more sentences under that and send it. When you send it, I want you to give me a copy." He went out of his way to stop me in my tracks and say, "why aren't you doing this? You're young. You have the opportunity to go get a doctorate." He mentored—that was so helpful. I don't know what I would have done. I probably would have continued—staying in North Hills, Arizona and probably worked as a principal, which would have been good, but I never would have experimented with the doctoral program, or tried it. So I did, so I applied and they accepted me. I got a letter of acceptance.

People always wanted me to get into administration because they thought I would be a good administrator to manage folks, so I dabbled in that a little bit,

working in various roles as a coordinator of a credentialing program and as an associate dean. But when I met [name of president], who was the President of Community University here in Oceanview, I was enamored by the idea that we would have a college mission driven like the historically Black colleges. The concept of *familia* is so central to who I am that I could not imagine working in a university whose culture did not match the culture that I grew up with. So that was another reason I took the position here at Community University because I had never been to a place, especially an institution of higher education, where the *familia* model was used as a strategy to make students, to help students feel comfortable, engage them and personalize, the experience, all in unison with the faculty and other people on the campus. That whole idea of family really impacted me in terms of always listening for advice and having support systems around me and support systems to make sure that I was progressing.

These mentors encouraged me to go to college, helped me improve my Spanish, held me accountable to applying to graduate school, and pushed me to take on new opportunities. I had some tremendous mentors that were Hispanic. They were always willing to really talk to me, not talk at me but talk with me and show me a respect, like, “You have potential. You can do this.” They didn’t get frustrated with me. They just had patience. They were sincere and authentic in making me feel like, “Hey, this person’s really trying to help me.” It’s like *familia*. It’s like an uncle talking to me, but these people weren’t my relatives. They were so prominent in my lifetime, all the way to my doctoral program. In

fact, even today as a president, I have mentors and people that I go to for advice and guidance because you don't know everything and you have to depend on other people that are experienced or know something. So mentors have probably been my biggest assets.

The people in Cesar's life provided him with guidance, encouragement, information, and roles that helped Cesar to develop his leadership and credentials, thereby providing him the network of resources or social capital he needed to advance. The early support Cesar received from his parents and extended family inspired his value for maintaining networks and listening to others' advice. As illustrated, these mentors were crucial to him pursuing and obtaining invaluable educational and professional opportunities. Although, a number of presidents noted that their mentors were often of a different cultural background, Cesar highlighted the fact that most of his influential mentors were Latino, and that their cultural background as Latinos was a significant part of their mentorship of him because he could relate to them and saw them as role models. In sum, Cesar's experiences reflect the presence of supports from an early age that helped shape his approach and values, and led him to identify and appreciate the many other mentors who cumulatively contributed to attaining the position of college president.

Cesar was one of the 13 presidents in this study who had mentors in their lives who helped advise them, facilitated their learning skills, or helped in obtaining experiences and positions of leadership. The 14th president explained that although he had a faculty member guide him to a graduate program and a president who provided him with a leadership opportunity, he did not believe he had ever had a mentor. In contrast,

those who identified mentors stressed the strong and guiding relationships they shared with these forces in their lives. Like Cesar, almost half of the study participants noted they had early mentors in their parents, teachers, or faculty members, as well as later mentors once they started their careers.

As they initially talked about who their mentors were, some presidents immediately cited the role their parents played in shaping their lives and their values. Jacinto talked about the influence of his father, who had recently passed away.

People talk about passion, and joy, and all of these things and they become so clichéd. But my father, he was one of these people that when I was in high school, my friends came not to see me when they came to my home; they wanted to see my dad. They wanted to talk to him and have him make them laugh and enjoy life. He had a love for people and a love for life that was infectious. If there is one thing that I hope to say he passed along to me it was that. My father, there were no walls between him and any person. I saw him interact with people of very high esteem, of very high state and I saw him interact with people that others would regard as of low estate. My father never made those distinctions, ever. He didn't know how to make those distinctions. He knew you and he respected you, and he loved you for who you were, unless you gave him a reason not to. I think that quality, more than any single one, is one that I would like to believe my father passed on to me through his mentorship of me: this joy for life and this belief in people. My father believed in people. He was an incredible listener and great listeners tell you that you have value. You have something to say inherently. If

they are listening to you, truly listening to you, they are telling you that you have value. There's an affirmation in that that I think transcends class, and culture, and background. But it certainly is linked to who my father was in my life. So that certainly was true of him and he was, I would say, as important a mentor as anyone was to me.

Similar to Jacinto, other Latino presidents' experiences in their families provided examples of loved ones motivating and guiding them. Outside the home, some presidents talked about early experiences when others looked out for them and assisted them in various ways. Eduardo, for example, relayed a story about a high school experience in which a teacher helped him move from the general academic track to the college-preparatory track and said "that changed my life," motivating him to look to college as a possibility. Many other faculty members in Eduardo's life helped guide him toward a career in special education and to complete his doctorate. Eduardo recalled that his mentors from the time he was a high school student to when he was a provost and vice president were instrumental in him becoming a college president. These mentors had a sense of what it would take for Eduardo to succeed, and they helped facilitate his success.

The main thing I would say [my mentors had] is they saw things in me that I didn't see myself, and they structured the environment so that those things would be drawn out in me and I would then develop a confidence in doing things that before that I may not have attempted.

Mentors in Eduardo's life were deliberate in providing opportunities to him in ways that highlighted or built his strengths. Other study participants recalled developing

strong relationships with their mentors and being held accountable by them to challenge themselves or complete tasks. Mentors also left a lasting impression on their mentees. At times, their influence helped mentees link to their cultural roots. Cesar talked about his mentoring experiences in college.

I met Dr. Damaris Gonzalez who really inspired me to continue to better myself as a teacher, and my Spanish, and I went to Mexico and studied to improve my Spanish. So I always met people, as mentors, that really took the time to talk to me and I really went out of my way to take the time to listen. So there was a whole bunch of mentoring experiences that I had that really helped guide me, that showed me the way, that showed me the path because I didn't know much about college.

By virtue of their accomplishments as well as their encouragement, mentors in Cesar's life motivated him to strive to educate himself and be a better professional. Once they started their careers in higher education, Latino presidents continued to connect with others who would help guide them in their careers and provide them with opportunities to grow. Andres, Clarissa, and Raul mentioned their supervisors nominated them to attend the ACE Fellows program, which provides practical training to higher education professionals on various components of presidential roles. The significance of this nomination is evident in Clarissa's thought that if her vice president had not nominated her for the ACE Fellowship she "would've still been a faculty member today." Nominators for the ACE Fellows program were executive leaders who also provided

study participants with a working relationship that helped them to grow. As Clarissa said of her mentor,

I think [he] was a very good mentor to me. ... The qualities that he had were he was a great listener. He didn't tell you what to do. He sort of listened and then suggested things. He also had great confidence in me. He made me feel like I was competent and that I could succeed. He had faith in me and I felt that. Then he also was very level-headed. He never talked to me about being president, for example. He always talked about the work I was doing that moment in time, and that's really important because I think you need to do each step well, not think about what's the next thing. So I didn't jump around from job to job. I stayed.

Although it was critical that her mentor provided her with opportunities, it was also vital that Clarissa's mentor communicated his confidence in her skills. Of the 14 study participants, 10 talked about how their campus presidents served as mentors, sometimes allowing them to work closely with them, and at other times providing them with major institutional tasks to accomplish, again, demonstrating their trust in their mentees' abilities. As a faculty member, Diego expressed an interest in learning more about administration to his president's assistant. Shortly after, the president got in touch with Diego and offered to mentor him. He recalled,

He was just a really good guy. He was the president. He said, "Look. Come to work for me. I will mentor you and help you out, and if the end of the year, if you don't like it, you can go back to the faculty." I said, "Well, okay." He really did—

I would meet with him every day. He always explained to me what was going on. The politics at that level, they can get pretty heavy.

He would send me everywhere. I was his alter ego, in a sense. The training that I got there was really, really critical, I think. He did mentor me. He made me go on a couple of interviews. He said, “I don’t want you to get the job, but I want you to go through the experience of interviewing, and the whole thing.”

The support and experiences that Diego’s mentor provided him was extensive, and helped him obtain the skills and exposure he needed to advance. Sometimes campus leaders selected study participants to help accomplish major goals for the institutions. Luis was brought on as provost by the current president to transform the institution from a liberal arts institution to a research institution. He recalled that pivotal experience:

He basically brought me in to change the university from a liberal arts undergraduate institution to a graduate research, which people told him that it was impossible to do, but that’s the challenge he gave me and that’s sort of what we did. I was there 8 years and when I left, I think we had five or six doctoral programs and we had another four or five in the development stages. We grew the institution from—when I got there, it had 11,000 students. When I left, it had 19,000. I probably hired about 200 faculty when I was there, all of them research faculty, though. That was a great ride there.

Luis obtained critical experiences and increased his leadership expertise under the mentorship of his president. Similarly, Lorena felt that her mentor “took a chance on” her by hiring her and giving her meaningful leadership responsibilities early in her career.

One mentor was Ramon Cintron, who was the first Latino president ever at a community college in Recurso and he kind of took a chance on me and took me on as his kind of assistant, but gave me some real concrete things that I needed to work on a broad level for the college. So he gave me an opportunity to share my talent, even though I lacked experience, and to have some broader exposure in the college that I had not had before.

Still appreciative of that early opportunity, Lorena thanked her mentor at a recent higher education event. With the trust that presidential mentors place in their mentees, it seemed natural for Latino presidents in this study to see their mentors as *familia*. Many presidents talked about their mentors as surrogate parents. Pedro fondly recalled his predecessor, who played a significant role in his professional development and success in higher education as a father figure.

I had a mentor in my predecessor ... who, to this day, I still—he just passed away unfortunately a couple of months ago—I still publicly talk about him as my second father, a White male who was the president of this institution, who served for 18 years as its president, as well. But he became sort of my other father, where my biological father didn't understand the world of higher education, Bob Smith obviously grew up in it and he became sort of that surrogate father for me in this environment.

As Pedro recalled, much like their biological parents or nuclear families, mentors developed caring bonds with their mentees and provided presidents in this study with strong support and resources to help them thrive on their campuses. From their mentors,

presidents in this study were able to decipher which leadership styles and approaches appealed to them. Hector talked about how his work with a number of mentor presidents pushed him to think about how he might do things differently if he were in a chief executive role.

In my case, I worked for a couple of presidents who were great mentors, taught me a lot of what to do and sometimes what not to do, and I think that soon you see that and say, “You know, I probably can do that job,” and that’s when you realize you may be able to do that. It’s probably more fun to be the leading dog instead of the second in the string.

Working closely with a number of mentor leaders broadened Hector’s knowledge of leadership approaches, and in this way, helped him feel motivated to pursue an executive-leadership role. Similarly, a presidential mentor provided Diego with experiences to better understand the field of higher education, and particularly in the role of president.

The president who got me into administration, I think he was really critical. He really shaped how I’ve looked at higher ed and he taught me what higher ed was all about, not only it’s goal, it’s mission, but the politics of it. He’s a really smart guy. He’s a good man.

Presidential mentors, like Diego’s, supported their mentees’ success by teaching them about navigating the politics of higher education in addition to the nuts and bolts of the field. These experiences with his mentor were transformative for Diego in his development as a higher education professional. As a result of Latino college presidents’

positive and influential experiences with their mentors, they too wanted to give back to others by mentoring them. Accordingly, Luis talked about his view of mentoring and about his commitment to mentoring others.

I think the other thing—I don't know whether it's a value or not—the ability to support other people in—and that's why I'm involved in sort of mentoring people in higher ed, and when somebody asks me to participate in a program that does that, I usually go ahead and do it because I think it's important to do, whether they're Latinos or not.

Luis felt strongly about his responsibility to give back to others by supporting their work or mentoring them. Other presidents wanted to ensure that diverse aspiring leaders in their organizations had similar opportunities to theirs . Through their experiences with mentoring—either being mentored or mentoring others—Latino college presidents participating in this study reflected their value and continuing concern for their community.

Although mentors were an instrumental way Latino college presidents in this study reflected their social capital, they also shared that organizations, colleagues, and the community were critical to them personally and professionally. Ruben summarized the cadre of supports that presidents rely on to accomplish their goals.

You rely on tens or hundreds of people, but usually you have about half a dozen, I would say, to 25 folks that you need to cultivate and pay attention to and develop a relationship over time. They run from individuals in your organization to individuals across the state and beyond. You need to talk to people across the

country and that's where your professional organizations come into play, where you can meet other presidents from other institutions and cultivate relationships with them too.

Networks, according to Ruben, must be appreciated and cultivated over a period of time to be helpful professionally. Accordingly, all the presidents discussed the networks they had created or tapped into to seek advice or support or to share experiences. For example, Raul talked about how, as president, he still depends on these networks. "I, just like everybody else, I pick up the phone and call friends. I call other presidents. I rely on professional networking to turn to other people for help or advice, and to this day, occasionally, I'll do that."

Gathering the support of peers who are aware of the challenges and responsibilities they have to address was crucial for presidents in this study to feel part of a community as they are progressing in their work. Pedro noted the advantages of receiving aid from his peers.

I also rely on presidential colleagues to give me a sense of what they're—in similar situations, obviously, give me a sense of what they're thinking, what they're doing, where they might have faltered or made mistakes on issues that I'm dealing with, to sort of help me think these issues through and to talk about alternatives to what I may be thinking about specific issues. So clearly I turn to my colleagues.

Through his peer network, Pedro is able to retrieve information about his situation at the same time that he can learn from his peers' mistakes. Although networks provided

presidents in this study with information and insight that helped them make more informed decisions, these groups and individuals also provided study participants with a valued sense of community. For Luis, who, during his professional career, has worked at institutions that are primarily White, creating cultural networks was vital. Before becoming president, Luis said that reaching out to Latinos in the area to build community and support was a way that he reduced his cultural isolation in racially homogenous institutions.

Well, I mean, I think that's what kept me sort of grounded. That's how I survived, especially working at places like Proactive University that was so White when I was there, is that I reached out to the local community so I could have a support group. I think when I was in the state of Alliance ... it was pretty much a White university, but again I connected myself to whatever little groups of Latinos that were there and worked in outreach centers that provided services to the Latino community.

The familiarity in experiences with other Latinos outside his institution was a source of comfort and connection for Luis that he sought and cherished, and which he credits for his longevity at PWIs. Once they became presidents, creating and maintaining support networks did not happen exclusively outside their institutions. Latino college presidents also appreciated the perspective and the talents of their staff members. Of the 14 presidents, 10 talked about the important role that their cabinets, faculty, or other key staff members played in advising them about internal or external issues. Ruben highlighted specific staff members on whom he relies.

My provost. The provost here is a new provost, but a provost plays a key position for a presidency. That is the position that actually runs the academic programs at any institution as is the interface between the faculty and the president. It's a terribly important position. So that position is relied upon. The vice president for finance or the vice president for administrative affairs at institutions has to be a key confidante and an important person in any presidency. The controller, the registrar, the dean of students, all of these folks, all of these organizationally important people are people you have to be able to trust. You also need key faculty and key professional staff whether they're direct supports or not.

With people he trusts in critical roles on campus, Ruben has been able to obtain the information he needs to lead his institution. Although staff members in key roles have knowledge and access to information that is critical for presidents, they also share similar goals for the institution to succeed. As a result of these collective experiences, Jorge trusted in his team's support.

I've got a great team around me that I feel very comfortable with and can rely on and lean on and know that they also have the same ideas and same anxieties as well, in being able to move this school forward.

The fact that Jorge feels his colleagues have similar goals helps him feel a sense of community and accomplishment in his work. Through their values and experiences, Latino college presidents learned early that their environment, and particularly family, friends, colleagues, and supervisors can provide needed support, information, and motivation. Many study participants noted it was their mentors who helped them obtain

professional experiences that prepared them and built their confidence in themselves to advance to higher level positions. Thus, through their openness to learning from others and their value of creating networks, Latino college presidents in this study were able to maximize the outcomes of their opportunities and prepare themselves for their current roles.

Navigational Capital: Finessing Success in Higher Education

So when you go into that (higher education) setting and you come from a particular background and experience, you've got to use what you are, who you are, you've got to live that, but you also have to understand the environment that you're in. You're in an environment that's not Hispanic and it's not focused on Hispanics. So you have to exist and co-exist and live in that environment and be successful and it's not easy.

~Cesar Perez

Higher education institutions have not always been ready to support or foster the success of Latino college presidents. For Cesar and other Latino chief executives in this study, achieving success was often a delicate balance of bringing their cultural strengths and values to an environment that may not be ready for them, while learning and maneuvering the norms and expectations of the institution. Although the culture and politics of institutions could have been stumbling blocks to these presidents as they were progressing in their careers, study participants shared ways they worked through difficult circumstances to achieve success. Some presidents talked about instances earlier in their careers, before they became president, when they had to decipher politics or decision-

making processes to accomplish their goals. Latino presidents also revealed that they faced and overcame challenging environments to far exceed expectations others had of their work or outcomes. As study participants waded through obstacles, they used inner strengths, perspectives, values, and approaches to not only deal with the challenges, but also to surpass their and their institutions' expectations. As a result, Latino college presidents used what is known as navigational capital in the community-cultural-wealth framework.

Lorena Arroyo's ascent to a presidency was marked by moments in which she has had to work through the politics and challenges of higher education. Currently, as president of a small, private HSI in the southwest, Lorena treads carefully to implement her vision as she recognizes the strides she has made after 40 years in the field. Although leadership in higher education can be complex and tricky, she has managed to effect changes and has striven to bring her institutional community to a different level of thinking.

Education was highly valued in my family. Before she passed away, my mom, who was very ill, made a pact with my grandmothers that I would attend college. When I had just graduated from high school and I went to the community college to register for classes. It was so overwhelming to me and so unfriendly and so non-Latino, that I went back home. This was 1965. I came home and I told my grandmother, "I can't do this." My grandmother said, "*Mala suerte,*" "Bad luck. You've got to go back." I went back. I think because of my family's real strong convictions and dreams for me about education, I bring that sense that I owe

something, maybe not so much to society as much as I owe it to my family, but the result of that is that I hope I make a difference on society.

My advancement to a presidency has not been a direct ascent, which I think you'll find with a lot of us. It's not just been moving from one position to another and another. For me it's been a zigzag. I went from being a high school teacher to program developer, dean, and then director of a support-services program, all at the college level before getting a presidency. Skipping the full-time faculty and department chairmanship have, on occasion, hurt me because the academy, particularly the faculty, still look down on presidents who haven't been faculty members or department chairs, believing that because they don't have these specific experiences they don't have the foggiest idea about managing education. So you have to work hard at establishing that you've got lateral competencies that you can apply to whatever position you're in.

I think my cultural values have been a challenge when I've been timid to speak up about something that I know is wrong or something that I know is not right. When I came out of [a southwestern U.S. university], it was a very cold and unwelcoming place for Latinos in the '60s. I came out with a bachelor of journalism degree and came to a television station in [a southwestern U.S. city]; foolish me, thinking that they would hire a Latino woman. That was not a time that the world of journalism was very open to women or minorities, and I got summarily dismissed from an interview by a guy with a big cigar hanging out of his mouth and his feet up on the table. He very condescendingly said to me, at the

age of 21, he leaned over the table and said, “Honey, I can’t hire anybody that looks like you.” Those were his exact words to me. I said, “Oh.” I actually said thank you and I walked out. That’s one I’ve punished myself for for years. That experience had a huge impact on me. However, it ended up leading me to a fairly good life. Those days [of discrimination and stereotypes about Latinos] are not over for us and they’re not over for a lot of our first-generation students who come out still being tremendously timid or afraid to speak up for what is right. That situation developed in me a quality of “this will never happen to me again.”

I think being able to learn from bad and good experiences is an important quality, and that you’re also able to learn from adversity, rejection, and your highs and your lows. Another really important quality to help you navigate through tough issues and circumstances is knowing yourself, knowing when you’ve gotten too tired, too hungry, too spent, too diminished on either your physical or emotional health. Finally, you have to know what your strengths are and what they’re not, and then you’ve got to complement your strengths, if you’re building a team, but you have to be willing to know what your strengths are and use them and teach them to other people. But you also need to know your weaknesses. I think there’s a danger in getting too confident that you kind of know it all.

I experienced a challenging assignment from the president’s office of leading the strategic-planning process for the college. I got that done with someone who was mentoring me at a higher level than the president, out of the transfers office, who taught me how [strategic-planning processes] were done. I

got things done by reading a lot. I tried to wade in. I think this is a real important competency of not being afraid to wade into waters that you don't know and there were some pretty nasty faculty who kind of were resentful of "Who is this woman out of the president's office and who does she think she is? What does she want us to do here?"

Another challenging experience was when I got caught in the crossfire of a board member who as a very liberal Jewish woman, she looked around at [a southwestern U.S. county] and noted that there were no woman presidents. There was no woman president at that particular college, and so [when I started as president] I got in the crossfire between a well-meaning trustee, a liberal Jewish woman who said it's time [to install a female president]. She got very crosswise with the faculty who was there, who had had a president for 20 years who had come up from the faculty. So when I walked in the door they were pointing their elephant guns not at her, but at me. So I got caught in that crossfire. It was a tough time. That was where I got my first vote of no confidence, which people now kind of say—now, if you get a vote of no confidence, it's kind of like a badge of courage because it's like, okay, so it means he's doing something, or she's doing something. Not to be reckless. It costs an institution a lot when that happens but you've got to take some calculated risks. Otherwise, why bother. And I know as a Latina, this is—I don't know. Our risk taking. It would be interesting to see what our level of risk taking is like for another study because I think it would be interesting to look at that. How willing are we to take a risk, whether it's moving

to another city, taking on a difficult challenge? I don't know. I know my grandmothers were real risk takers, so I grew up with that a little bit.

I've realized that change is really hard in academia. It moves along in 10-year increments. I think the work that I'm involved in now has really made people wake up to the need for change that is going to help us get there. It's not easy. I'm talking about an institutional, broad-based transformative level. I'm not talking about changing some small policy. Change on a broad institutional level is much harder when you're dealing with traditions and people who are vested in certain ways and certain policies and ways of being and doing. We're talking about virtually changing what is a nonentrepreneurial and very status quo enterprise into an enterprise that is more entrepreneuring because of the pressure that we're under. Higher ed is really being criticized now. I was reading an article by somebody named Riley, called, "The Faculty Lounges and Other Reasons You Won't Get the Education You Pay For." It's a damning article on higher ed and a real endorsement for for-profit schools. So when I think about change [in higher education], I don't think any college president out there has even begun to tackle the scale of change that needs to happen within our institutions, and hopefully our Latino students won't get caught in the middle. If we can change it so that it works for Latino students, then it will work for everybody. I'll be happy if I leave a learning organization behind that can also learn to navigate its way toward better outcomes for Latino students because I don't think we know how to do that, but we know how to do some of it.

This is a time in which we're asking our faculty and our staff not to just do the same old stuff they've been doing, and certainly not to do less, but to do more, and I think the president's got to be seen doing the same thing. As a result, I've become much more engaged in committee work. I'm going to be much more hands on, which unfortunately takes me away from my fundraising work, which still needs to happen, so I've got some things I need to figure out. To get some of this work done we've also hired a family-relations coordinator, just because we know that working with families is as important as working with students. Ultimately, I want to leave behind a learning organization that will know how to navigate its way so that there are better outcomes for Latino students. If I can do that, I'll feel that all the bullshit, pardon my French, I've had to deal with was worth it.

As Lorena noted in her comments above, difficult circumstances can come from multiple directions and may not always result from one's own actions. As she recalled, in her early career, Lorena did not know how to handle bias directed toward her in professional settings. Over the years, however, she gained self-awareness, experience, and confidence in herself to approach challenges with innovation, an honest assessment of her abilities, and an unwavering vision of her role and the role of institutions. Furthermore, as Lorena recounted her experiences, her views of the obstacles she has encountered, such as the vote of no confidence or her perspective of slow moving change, have been equally important to her ascent as ability to handle those challenges. As a

result, Lorena has emerged with a clearer vision of higher education institutions and her place in continuing to improve her own campus.

Just as Lorena recounted the influence of her grandmother in forcing her to figure out the challenges of her educational environment, other presidents told of how their families' examples of making sense of difficult situations inspired them. As Clarissa noted in her *testimonio*, recounted above, her father's composure in addressing issues with her provided a model of communication that has allowed her to address conflicts with her colleagues productively. Still other presidents in this study attributed their openness to and value of different styles of communication to their upbringing. Families provided their children with a sense of security that fostered their confident attitude in negotiating obstacles. Finally, study participants credited their parents with helping them develop unquestionable ethics that ultimately allowed them to gain initially reluctant supporters. In conclusion, the influence of parents' examples and support resulted in college presidents in this study developing skills and approaches that contributed to their ability to overcome hurdles in their careers.

In the discussion below, I share some of Latino college presidents' specific scenarios that reflected the ways they not only navigated political and difficult situations in their institutions, but also made significant contributions to their campuses or communities. To push their way through these challenging environments, Latino presidents talked about being "persistent," "disciplined," and "*cabeziduro*," or hard-headed. It was not enough to be skilled or qualified to do the job. Cesar discussed how he "moved faster" when he first became president, getting to know the community and

influencers quickly and letting them know his goals and vision for the institution. Similarly, Jose reflected, “to progress, I had to work harder than anybody else.” Andres shared that when he first arrived as president, he was greeted by an editorial in the local newspaper questioning his selection as a decision to fill a quota. In response, he remained focused on doing his job and 10 years later, he’s still at that institution. Consequently, as illustrated with Andres and other study participants, their approaches facilitated Latino presidents to work through the challenges and subsequently assisted them in flourishing as leaders of institutions.

At times, the challenges study participants encountered were related to their professional advancement in higher education. Shortly after telling Eduardo that he was not going to be offered the provost position he had hoped for, Eduardo’s president assigned him the responsibility of raising \$7 million for an infrastructure project for his institution. Although Eduardo was disappointed at not getting the position, he plowed through tasks and strategies to get the infrastructure job done.

When I was at Academic Enhancement State University [as interim provost], we had an infrastructure project that required the replacement of the entire sewage system on the campus in terms of the pipes, etc., the structures, and the president said, kind of in an off the cuff way, “We need to get \$7 million to do this. Why don’t you see if you can do that?” This was after I had been informed that I would not be the next provost, that they had selected somebody else to be the provost, the permanent provost. So I went to [a southwestern U.S. city] and I started meeting with legislators and I started telling them what the importance was about

what we were doing, why it was important, what the impact was going to be, but I started doing my rounds and developing the political support for what we were trying to accomplish in the budgeting process. So it was an extreme surprise to the president when he received notification that in the budgeting process, we'd received the \$7.5 million to do the infrastructure work.

Although recently being denied the provost position, Eduardo proceeded in full force with the task of gathering support for a major institutional project. Ultimately, he used his skills of gathering and providing information and connecting with politicians and decision makers to obtain the needed funds for the project. Eduardo's successful efforts left a lasting impression on his president. Eduardo shared that many years later the president admitted that he had made an error in not selecting him as provost. Finally, in the face of not receiving the support or opportunities for which they were well qualified, presidents in this study exemplified their resolve to continue their exceptional work.

Presidents also shared that, at times, although their executive leader or supervisor supported their success, others in the university community resisted their leadership. Despite being recruited by the president to be deputy director of a large research institute and as the first Hispanic senior leader at his institution, Jose was not entirely welcomed to his unit. He recalls how his approach to his colleagues' opposition increased his credibility and influence and eventually strengthened his relationships with them.

So I just kept taking assignments that I figured I would take the initiative, and I would say within 6 months of having been there, the director would not make a move without involving me in the meetings because I would write up the findings.

I started a whole record system. I started implementing a whole set of administrative procedures.

Jose's approach, though pragmatic, was very strategic. Although he knew that he was not welcome in his unit, he focused his time on learning what his division needed in protocols and processes; then developed systems to address those gaps. Along with his skilled decision making, his approach facilitated him becoming a key player in the department that almost rejected him. Similarly, when faced with the daunting task of proposing a grading-system change at his unionized campus, Pedro also tackled challenges to maximize support for his proposal.

[I] challenged faculty, met them head-to-head at faculty meetings and was able to get the grading system changed. I did it largely as a result of becoming a knowledge-based expert. People were arguing about this issue not based on knowledge of the contract or on the reality of the grades, but were just doing it based on emotions and on [what] faculty know best or administrators were saying "well we know best," but nobody was looking at the data. Through simply—through dint of plowing through all the data, knowing what the contract allowed and didn't allow in terms of managerial rights and faculty rights and prerogatives, I was able to cobble and stitch together a grading system that was much more streamlined, much more efficient, much more reflective of satisfactory progress, and ended up getting it through the college senate at the time.

Effectively managing this situation required Pedro to fully understand all facets of the issue. Subsequently, his ability to grasp the situation combined with his time and

efforts resulted in his success. In sum, the ingenuity and persistence exhibited by study participants as they were ascending to higher leadership roles contributed to their success in those positions and provided them with invaluable skills to propel them to executive leadership.

Once Latino administrators scaled hurdles to become chief executives, new challenges awaited. As Hector shared, there were many times when he and his Latino peers were “the first” and this came with its own sets of expectations. They were not necessarily expected or supported to succeed, and therefore study participants had to determine the most effective way to proceed. For Cesar, that required tapping into skills he’d learned growing up in his community.

Well, what I did was—first of all, persistence. I persisted. I moved faster. I was more motivated to do the thing that a president should do, connect with the community, connect with influencers, show them who I was, why I was here and what I was trying to accomplish, and I overcame the resistance to change by doing those things and making myself extremely visible and finding out who the influencers are. And you know what? Growing up in the *barrio*, you know who the influencers are. You know who the people are that have power, people that can hurt you, people that can help you. So my *barrio* skills, if you will, came into play. I’m a survivor. That’s just the way I am. I have those *barrio* skills. I’m alert, I’m perceptive and I know these people didn’t realize I knew what was going on. They thought, “He’s a nice guy. He doesn’t know what’s happening,” But, they

found out differently. They're all gone now and here I am and the university is succeeding.

Even as the chief executive at his institution, Cesar was compelled to strategize and identify resources to help him gain credibility and trust at his institution, soon after he started his role. Similarly, Hector rationally accepted the obstacles common to presidents who are “the first” at their institution and noted the common reactions he encountered.

In my case, I'm the first Latino president that this institution has ever had. Being the first at anything—I've been first at many things—you get a little bit of wonderment from other people. You get a little resistance because you are different from some other people and you get a little bit of patronizing from some people. It's just part of you being the first ones to break some ground and some glass ceilings. You have had to sort of say—for instance, I had one person say, “We need to be sure you succeed.” Well, you know, I appreciate that but I'm going to succeed on my own. I'm not sure you would have said that to somebody who is blonde, blue-eyes with a last name like Smith or Jones. It is a bit patronizing. Those things do happen and you just notice that they are there. There are some people who, even though they have very good intentions, they say, “Well, I'm not sure. He's so different from us.” Like I said, I open my mouth I sound different and probably at some times I'm probably a little more animated than other people might like for a president to be. My office looks different. It's full of masks from Latin America. I'm not sure many presidents' offices are full

of masks from the rest of the hemisphere. There's always a little bit of these kinds of differences. At least in the case of the—because I sound different and sometimes I behave a little different, at least I get noticed. I'm not unnoticed and that helps in some ways.

Subsequently, it was with self-awareness and confidence that Hector was able to think critically about others' reaction to him as the first Latino to lead their institution, and as a result was able to keep those interactions in perspective. Although there are benefits to a higher level of attention, Hector also expanded on this concept of being a minority in a community and how drawing on his inner reserves is a strategy that helps him cope with the scrutiny he has encountered.

Because you are not clearly in the majority, there are not that many Latino presidents, etc., you are a bit of an anomaly, a bit of a what do you call it, a—you know, a little bit of a character. You are not in the mainstream in that sense, and therefore you are looked at probably a little more carefully than people in the majority would. You are different. You sound different, in my case, if you have an accent, or the cultural background. You're looked at a little different and therefore I think sometimes the expectations of either success or failure are different from the expectations that you have from the majority-type population. Therefore when you succeed, they make a much to do than other times, and when you fail, they make much more of a to do than they normally would, but that's just because you're in the minority, etc. My institution is mostly—I live in a very Anglo community and my institution is 65% Anglo. At one time, I was the rat in

my community. I was not the normal kind of guy. Therefore you have to have a great deal of confidence in yourself and your abilities and your self-perception of who you are and what you are. You've got to be one which is realistic rather than mystify, either way. I think you have to look at yourself every day in the mirror and say, "Hey, I put on my pants like anybody else and I brush my teeth like most people do." I'm not significantly better or significantly worse than anybody else, but I'm persistent about it. I'm disciplined about what I do.

Hector recognized that his confidence and self-perception were critical to managing the challenges of being under a microscope and not losing his sense of self. Although study participants noted the importance of believing in themselves despite others' expectations, their faith in others was also an essential component of their approach. As they assisted others' in examining their bias or overcoming hardships, their communities responded positively. In working with his campus after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 caused some divisiveness among community members, Pedro recalled his reaction to the tense situation.

And a very interesting challenge to me came on September 11, 2001, when the towers came down. ... We lost faculty, we lost some students, as well. The country really began to question whether the American experiment had gone awry and we began to demonize a subgroup of the American population and begin to look at them suspiciously, as though they were all culpable in that act. You know, it polarized some people in the community and I had a very interesting time in bringing the community together to talk this issue through as a university

community and it really tested how we defined diversity. It really tested how we defined tolerance. It really tested how we can go beyond crisis and sort of join hands and say, “We need to get through this together.” That was a very interesting time on this campus, in particular, I guess, because of where I believed we were in terms of our attitudes towards other groups and other people and some of what I was hearing in certain pockets on campus about, again, whether we had gone too far with the American experiment. Could this group be trusted? That was a very difficult time for us.

As I said back in September of 2001, that whole dialogue about differences in culture and embracing a group of people that was being attacked, not because of culpability but because of their names or what they wore, that was another one where I had to stand up and just be very forceful about what the role of higher education is, the notion that if we can’t have a very difficult discussion, an open and honest discussion about those issues on a university campus, then where do you have those discussions? Where do you have them if you can’t be safe in talking about those issues here? So that to me was a very important dialogue and difficult time, but one where I think I shone and the university shined, as well.

Pedro grappled openly with his campus’ response to the attacks of September 11th while he also elevated the conversation to focus on having honest and meaningful dialogue about support in a diverse higher education community. In these ways, he provided community members with opportunities to explore their feelings and to learn

from each other. Pedro's approach and efforts resulted in his campus being more unified than ever. Comparably, as his conservative institution grappled with diversity, Jacinto advocated an open and honest dialogue to help the community grow.

I think one of the things I saw instantly when I came to the institution and made a commitment to recruiting more Latino students to this institution was that while I heard people talk about being inclusive, I didn't see it in terms of curricular choices and hiring practices. We needed to do much more in terms of how we advertised positions and the way we recruited people if we really were interested in recruiting top-level Latino academics. We had to know where they were. We had to reach out to them. We had to shift away even the way we published materials and how we marketed the institution.

I think the way we were able to accomplish that was to be as transparent as possible and really to face some of these biases that were present and to deal with them in very open ways. We held town-hall meetings and anything from as broad as a town hall to as narrow as a cabinet meeting, we tried to inculcate and, more than that, to explain what we believed a true commitment was all about and how one got that done. It wasn't by checking off boxes but it was through a comprehensive effort that was related to a value. If you say you truly value inclusion, that you really want to reflect the fullness of who we are as an institution, then that has to be true in the way you recruit students, hire faculty, and marketing materials, and on and on and on, the way you develop programs. So I'm am very grateful ... and this has been a team effort; I've only been a part

of a team that really believed in these values—but we have been able to develop a minor in Latin American studies. It’s a small thing but it’s an important milestone for us. We’ve had some outstanding hires since dollars ... have come to us that will help us in this regard as well. That’s certainly one of the ways that we’ve had a small victory in shifting an understanding about diversity in this community.

As they attempted to foster environments where students of different backgrounds can feel comfortable and succeed, Pedro and Jacinto were initially met with resistance from staff, faculty, and students. In response, these presidents used their values for diversity and community as key components of their strategies not only to help their community members build relationships with each other, but also to enhance their institutions’ responsiveness to the needs of all members of their community. As a result of their efforts, these study participants addressed their concerns as they helped their communities resolve their differences.

As they worked with their campus communities to address challenges, Latino college presidents also used external resources. Presidents in this study highlighted the role of external communities in accomplishing their goals. A number of presidents recounted how they reached out to external community members to gather more support for themselves, their work, and their institutions. Clarissa’s ability to galvanize financial support and develop collaborations resulted in her institution’s dual-enrollment program. Similar to Raul, who said “it’s better to ask forgiveness than to ask permission” in undertaking certain projects, Clarissa sought potential partners before seeking campus

approval of her plans, for fear that disapproval or bureaucracy might impede her progress.

So I went to College Preparation High School and I met with two guidance counselors. I didn't tell my secretary that I was going to meet with them. I didn't put the appointment on my book. I didn't want anybody here to know because ... I had an idea and I didn't want them to tell me the idea wouldn't work. And I didn't speak to the superintendent of schools at Collegetown and I didn't speak to the principal because it was a bureaucracy, and I knew that if I got caught up in the bureaucracy, nothing would happen.

The result of Clarissa exploring her idea with external partners before seeking approval or going through the usual protocol was the more immediate development of her dual-enrollment program. In explaining her actions, Clarissa admitted that she did not believe the program would have occurred otherwise. Likewise, as an administrator and before his presidency, Raul forged ahead with some of his community-based projects without discussing them with his supervisor. After his participation in those projects, Raul avoided disapproval from his superiors by collecting letters of appreciation from community partners and handing them in as he reported on the activities. Now, as a college president, Raul continued using this approach of never taking no for an answer and always finding a way to yes. Accordingly, he cited his determination, strength, and "knowledge that I'm going to find a way to get this done," which he learned from his father and activist aunt, as having contributed to his ability to succeed. With

determination, resources, and a vision for their work, Raul, Clarissa, and other presidents in this study accomplished their goals.

Although Clarissa and Raul went around the typical protocol for making decisions, other study participants shared times when they were expected to resolve institutional issues. Throughout his career, Luis attempted to connect the institutions for which he worked with the surrounding communities. His work with the Oceanview Public Schools resulted in a partnership that benefited Latino students, at the same time that it connected his institution's graduate programs with the community.

While I was there, we started things like we worked with the Oceanview Public Schools and started a gifted program because a lot of the Latino kids were in the East Oceanview region of the Oceanview Public School system but nobody had ever done anything with it. So I and a couple of other people from the School of Ed went over and talked to them. They were concerned that they had a lot of bright kids and their kids couldn't take gifted courses that were offered. So we did a study and we found out that somewhere around 12% of the kids in the East Oceanview region were highly gifted. So we ended up telling the district that we wanted to see if we could start a program. They said, "That's fine. You can try to do it, but you won't get anybody to come." I think we ended up hosting a meeting at one of the local schools and I think we had something like 3,500 parents show up—which was really surprising to the district, and as a result, we started a program that some of our students from social work, education, psychology would work with the kids, and that program, I think, still exists.

With his idea, Luis inspired 3,500 parents to consider participating with his institution, as they sought to meet their children's needs. Further, he developed an opportunity to enhance graduate students as well as the institutions' relationship and work with the local community. This ingenuity created a mutually beneficial situation for all involved.

As a result of their ability to persist and overcome challenging circumstances, study participants not only addressed institutional issues, but also made themselves invaluable employees and leaders on their campuses. Their navigational skills facilitated their development of college-access programs and fruitful partnerships.

Resistant Capital: Advocating for Needed Change

Despite having the cultural tools and approaches described above to contribute to their professional success, Latino presidents have much to face in the field of higher education. The lack of diversity among presidents and other leadership positions, the assumptions and stereotypes held about Latinos, and the often unfriendly culture of institutions, pose significant challenges to Latino professionals in higher education. Correspondingly, Latino presidents in this study recounted some of their earlier career efforts to expose injustices or equalize the opportunities as mid- and senior-level administrators. As presidents, they countered the assumptions that new colleagues made about their abilities, and faced opposition as they attempted to effect change in their campus communities. Their sometimes visible and at other times less obvious challenges to these views and situations reflected their resistant capital. Finally, with resistant

capital, presidents in this study sought to correct the deficiencies they observed and enhance their campus community's ability to welcome and support everyone.

When the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City occurred, as noted earlier, Pedro Rodriguez encountered a very divided community on his public, urban campus. This situation highlighted Pedro's ability to stand for the purpose of public institutions, at the same time that he encouraged healthy and honest dialogue about diversity. In leading his campus through other challenges, such as maintaining the accessibility of public higher education, Pedro consistently pushed his campus to think broadly about the mission of his institution, while respecting the views and concerns of others on campus. As noted below, Pedro's skills at addressing critical issues in an institution as he created opportunities for the community to come together to explore differences has not only led to his success, but has also ensured that his institution addresses current academic and resource challenges in value-centered ways.

I'm first generation in terms of pursuing higher education. My parents were working class, poor, and, if anything, they taught me humility, certainly a good strong work ethic, to be nonjudgmental about others because they were certainly being judged by others, but never felt that it was appropriate for them to raise issues about other people's backgrounds or beliefs. They also, as did all second-generation parents, still true today obviously, wanted the best for me in terms of possibilities for the future. They certainly didn't want me to echo their lives in terms of economic circumstances and mobility, and always gave me a sense of the need to constantly improve myself. They gave me a sense of self-discipline, of the

need to really take it upon myself to improve; that I should not assume that others were going to do that for me, but that I needed to take that responsibility on myself. We had a very close sense of family and it gave me a sense of protection, a sense of how the cultural values of our family were vital to our own sense of safety, our own sense of security, our sense of value and self-worth in seeing that in the extended family that I belong to. I saw that in my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, and again, it showed me that this is the way that society should function, that there should be safety in family, there should be a sense of progress in the family.

Being bilingual has helped as the Latino population at this institution begins to grow; you can just see the smile on their faces when I meet with parents and with other groups and I open up my conversation with them in Spanish. There's a great sense of ease about that and a great sense of comfort. And then I'll go to English, obviously, but then I'll go back to Spanish, depending on what the audience is. I have to play it that way. That immediately breaks down barriers, especially with parent groups and with outsiders who are Spanish speaking. So that has been an interesting tactic that so many—I mean, Rosa Rivera does it all the time at Blue Seas State University. She has a similar population, as well. But I'll also do it with non-Spanish speaking populations. I'll go to meetings off campus and I'll start out by making my welcoming remarks in Spanish, just to let them know that—give them a sense of what it's like being on the other side of that, where they don't understand what's being said. So it's an advantageous

position to be in. Certainly, when you think about people who are monolingual and are put into situations increasingly where the dominant language may be another one and not the one that they speak, and they feel the uncomfort, I think, and the need to respond to it. So it's only been advantageous and I use it to my advantage.

Since my institution is very diverse and because we're first generation and we serve largely underprepared students, there has been an ongoing debate about whether underprepared students should be served at the baccalaureate-degree level and whether we should shrink to excellence, which is one of [the] terms that was being used. We've had this debate since I've been here. Some years ago, it became a really significant debate. The feeling was that our retention and graduation rates were really plummeting and that the only way to demonstrate success was to increase those rates, and the only way to increase those rates was to become smaller, and the only way we could become smaller or the impact of being smaller would be that we would become less diverse. We had some real good pitched battles on here. My response was that these changes would be just as racist as having a policy where we're only going to admit White students. We wouldn't have been saying it, but basically what we'd be saying is if we're going to become smaller, we're going to be all White. I argued that we didn't have to become smaller.

I suggested that we could stay the same size and would have to do a better job of recruiting students of color who are perhaps better prepared to take on the

undergraduate curriculum, and if not, have a remedial program in place that guarantees that once we bring them in, that they will graduate in a timely fashion. This debate has been resolved, in that, quite frankly, we didn't accept the notion that you improve retention and graduation rates by bringing in White students, but instead that we acknowledged that we needed a recruitment program that is much more aggressive in bringing students of color who meet our admissions standards because the admissions standards are what they are. I had to speak very forcefully from the bully pulpit of the presidency about this issue of we need to have an open dialogue about how to improve these things because I wasn't comfortable with what the data were telling us, and to be very honest about those data and what those data were telling us in terms of policy directions and curriculum revision, and a lot of people didn't want to get into that because they were comfortable in no change.

So that was a difficult dialogue to have and I really had to get out there in the field and meet with faculty groups and be very forceful in my opinion and my policy directions on that stuff. Largely, within the framework of strategic planning, because as you probably know, strategic planning, they're anathema to that, the notion of objective analyses of outcomes was difficult. Perhaps, more importantly, we now have an aggressive remediation program, one that really meets the needs of underprepared students and puts the resources so that they have a better chance of success than perhaps we might have had 10 or 12 years ago.

There was a time in the '50s and '60s where public education was the great equalizer. Now I think public higher education is the great equalizer. The challenge has come, to some degree, in communicating the value of that to, if you will, nonbelievers. They're out there. That the urban public higher education mission is not only valuable but essential to higher education and that institutions like this add value to the enterprise. I hope that the mission of this institution remains vibrant and essential, that the students that we have historically served, although the names may change over the generations, the dreams and the issues remain the same, that we play an important role in being the great equalizers. I think that if I can demonstrate that this institution continues to live true to that, that I've been in some way influential in maintaining that vision and mission and carrying the banner for that, I think that's the legacy that I'd like to keep, and certainly the one that this poor little kid growing up in New York City, of parents who were working class, if he or she want to, they can be a university president. It's open. It's a real possibility.

The above excerpt from Pedro's interchange reflected his consistent advocacy of access and inclusiveness. This resistant capital was inspired by his cultural background and experiences that helped to ground him in his value for diversity. As president, Pedro took a lead role in helping his campus community members talk with each other and heal after the losses and fear associated with the September 11 attacks. He has used his role to push his institution to think more creatively to address enrollment and graduation statistics. As a president, Pedro has devoted much time to communicating the value of

public higher education to “nonbelievers.” As his institution explored whether underprepared students should be served at four year colleges rather than at community colleges, Pedro remained firm in his convictions that his institution should also help underprepared and underserved students. Pedro’s need to maintain resistance capital, however, was not unique. In fact, other presidents recounted moments when they stood for something they believed, sometimes in the face of much opposition.

One president, Raul Sanchez, talked about using “social justice as a career guide” to explain his deliberate approach to leadership in higher education. With his father and activist aunt as inspirations, Raul has striven to create more opportunities for Latinos, to increase their numbers as students and as professionals in higher education. Other presidents cited their parents and families as motivators for their work to increase access to college, feeling a sense of duty to help other Latinos because their parents or siblings did not have the same opportunities. For some presidents, like Clarissa, it was her parents’ sacrifices to get her what she needed that made her appreciate them, as well as the differences she could make in her leadership role. Similarly, each president’s experience reflected their interest in challenging inequality in and beyond their campus. In this way, each president expressed their resistant capital.

Of the 14 presidents in this study, 13 expressed their commitment to advocating or making critical institutional decisions around issues of diversity. For each of these presidents, their role was an opportunity to correct deficiencies in higher education; to undo the policies and practices that had isolated the promise of higher education from people of color. Sometimes their fight was about the greater community or future

generations; at other times, the struggle was personal and immediate. When Jose started his role as president, a mountain of opposition awaited him, as 67 faculty and scientists petitioned him not to accept the position.

Jose's confidence in his role and his ability to stand up to the faculty contributed to his longstanding success as president at the same university. Although the petition was an example of an organized act of resistance to Jose's leadership, others talked about everyday microaggressions they confronted in higher education. Luis explained that the microaggressions he encountered in his career questioned his credibility.

I would say that the biggest challenges have been establishing credibility because, like I said before, either people think that you're there because you're window dressing, or to meet some affirmative-action goal that the institution had. And a lot of my beginning jobs were sort of like that, like the interview question when I went to Ocean State College [when I was asked how I would ensure that I wouldn't ruin the academic standards if I got the job]. But there's been a lot of things sort of similar to that, one of the challenges really being that people ask you questions they would never ask a White person, and they'll ask you in public. So you learn to get behind the question and learn how to answer things like that, especially if they're in public, and sort of show them that you take the high road, be more professional than they will ever be.

Beyond the personal assaults that Latino presidents challenged were the ways their institutional communities handled issues of diversity. Like Luis, in these settings, other study participants chose to react to immediate interactions in ways that modeled

respect and professionalism. In contrast, to proactively raise awareness about the experiences of language minorities, presidents, including Luis and Pedro, chose to speak Spanish to non-Spanish speaking audiences.

By speaking Spanish to monolingual English-speaking audiences, Luis challenges these audiences to walk in the shoes of immigrants who may not know English. In this way, he believed he can help others be more empathetic as they encounter those who are non-English speaking. Similar to Luis, other presidents in this study chose to address their institution's notion of acceptance, mirrored in its curriculum and hiring practices. Jacinto, for example, felt that his predominantly White religious institution's commitment to having a more inclusive environment was not reflected in their recruitment efforts or their curriculum. He decided that it was vital for him to highlight these problem areas to help his institution move forward.

I would say one of the things I believe I've been able to do here is to broaden this community, and I mean by that the university community, the understanding of diversity. That is one of the things that I think I've been able to do here, and I don't think I was expected to do that because there was some resistance to the broadening of that definition because I think there was a cultural bias against a certain definition of diversity. I think there was a belief that, at least in this environment, there was something inherently liberal about diversity initiatives. And I think that's why there was an intolerance of sorts toward broadening that view.

Jacinto's acts of resistance took the form of holding his institution accountable to what it purported its values to be. As Jacinto's and other presidents' campuses grappled with ways to keep their institutions competitive, institutional values were sometimes put into question, particularly the values of access and inclusion. In response, Latino presidents in this study stood up for the possibility that every student who wanted an education could and should get that education. Pedro saw public higher education institutions as "the great equalizers" in this country. As he started his presidential role, he became more conscious of how he could put his values into action with his tenure as president.

So it was when I first became president that the reality of what was possible and my responsibility to make real what was possible first crystallized with me as president of the institution. They first crystallized in me when I sat, I guess, in this chair as president 19 years ago, when I realized that now not only do I understand these values and really embrace them, but now I have the opportunity and the obligation to see how I could translate them into university policy and decision making and I literally sat—I didn't change the furniture when I became president 19 years ago, so I sat in Robert Smith's [my predecessor's] chair and said, "Holy smokes. Now it's time for me to either put up or shut up. I either move this stuff forward because I really believe in it, or I take the easy road as president and sort of navigate down the middle and see how long I can last by not making waves and not being controversial."

Upon reaching the presidential level, Pedro realized he had a responsibility to create the kind of institution that reflected his values of equity and access. Simultaneously, he recognized that implementing his vision might be difficult and involve opposition.

Study participants also faced challenges that extended beyond their campuses. At the state level, Cesar experienced resistance to his focus on the dire status of Latino educational achievement in his state. In his view, despite the Latino population being the majority, issues were often discussed in terms of the general population. Cesar dissented from this approach of speaking generally and, instead, pushed the conversation in a different direction.

Part of my job as a president is to engage with community, obviously, and that was a big opportunity for me to engage at the statewide level. I felt there was a lot of resistance to talking about issues focused on Latinos. Even though we're 50% of the population in the state, people want to kind of brush it all together and say, "Hey, we've got all kinds of students here and it's kind of generic." So I always had to push and push hard about the whole idea of Hispanic students being the majority and that being the 800 pound gorilla in the room that we're not talking about, about the whole idea of English-language learners, which cuts across a lot of cultures, and I also threw in the African Americans because those are the ones that also have been part of the achievement gap and the falling way behind in their academic preparedness in K-12 and higher ed. So people knew when I came to a meeting that I was going to ask questions and push, and there was always pushback.

Cesar used his position and access to decision-making circles to address the critical educational issues that others refused to discuss. His goal was to make sure that resources and opportunities were afforded to Latinos and African Americans who were underprepared academically. Subsequently, he succeeded in conducting an analysis exploring specific gaps in Latino and African American students' academic experiences. In the same way, to ensure that more students from diverse backgrounds had the opportunity to attend her institution, Clarissa started a dual-enrollment program. Without seeking permission or going through the usual approval process, she used her networks and resources to put the pilot program into place the first year. As a result of their efforts, underrepresented students were afforded the attention and resources required to address existing inequities.

At times, Latino college presidents in this study also had to contend with board leaders who disagreed with their vision. When he started his tenure as president at Diversity University, Jorge's board was interested in changing the Latino-focused mission of the college. Jorge, who had spent most of his higher education career in positions where he was in charge of recruiting Latino students, was adamant about the focus of the school. He believed there was a place in the higher education arena for his institution and he believed that the need was there for a university that was culturally sensitive and responsive.

Five years ago when I got here, there was great opposition of this school moving forward. There was great debt. There was great division among the trustees and the faculty and staff. And so I stepped into a really very difficult situation. Many

people thought that it would be over soon, that it wouldn't last, that this school wouldn't last, the school would go under, and it hasn't. Matter of fact, we've grown 100 students in the last 4 years, so we've added new property and new land and new buildings and things like that.

I would not say it was anything as far as I've done, but I think that again, it's just being able to, one, trust God through it all, two, surround myself with good leaders, three, letting those leaders have great say in what we're doing here, making sure it's a team effort not a dictatorship as far as my leadership. They're really having great teamwork to be able to grow this institution back. And again, I think more than anything else, is just continue to tell the story over and over and over again to people. So that has been difficult work, financially stressful at times for my staff and I, wondering if we'll get the next paycheck. But at the same time, we feel good about where we are, where we're going, the growth of the institution, the future of the institution. Again, there was a time that a lot of people just thought that it would close the doors and there was a few trustees at the time that really just didn't believe in the direction I was taking the institution, and I wasn't taking it in any different direction than what it had been. It's just that they had an idea of really turning this into another liberal arts institution like any other school, and moving it away from being a Hispanic training institution that it was. That's not where I was going at all. I wanted it to continue to be the Hispanic institution it's always been and so they thought because I was not taking it their direction, they thought it would fail. They did not believe that the Hispanic [faith

community] here in the state would support it, and there would be others that would support it, but it has worked out and God has continued to bless us and provide for us, as well. So yeah, we've moved forward.

Jorge's fight to maintain the cultural focus of his institution was rooted in his value for the Latino background as a central component of every Latino student's educational experience. He felt strongly about the gap that his institution filled in the higher education options available, and was able to obtain support by finding like-minded colleagues to forge ahead with his vision, despite his trustees' reservations. After 5 years at the helm, Jorge has garnered enough external and board support that he has developed plans to expand his institution to serve more students.

As presidents talked about their investment in increasing access to education, they linked transformation of the oppressive environment of higher education and campuses to their vision of increased access. Latino presidents have identified a multitude of ways to contribute to the dismantling of structures in higher education that have served to disadvantage their communities. The majority of presidents, 12 of 14, discussed how their value of diversity has resulted in prioritizing recruitment of diverse students, staff, and faculty to their campuses. In fact, Diego noted that he decided to go into administration because it was clear that those leadership roles had the power to effect changes on a campus that he felt were necessary.

People complain about not having enough Latino faculty. Well, those decisions are made at the faculty level, not at the administrative level. You've got to get through the barriers that they put up. One of the ways that you can do that is if

you have control of the purse-strings, you can apply pressure. That's what you see throughout higher ed, more and more Latino faculty, more women, and part of that is just the carrot and the stick. You've got to nudge people in the right direction. That's why I decided—when I went into administration, I said, “Look. If I'm in that position, I can do a lot more for students and faculty than if I'm a faculty member working one-on-one, one person at a time.”

To be effective in transforming institutions to become more welcoming and responsive to diverse communities, Diego was clear that having control of resources was critical. Diego entered higher education administration with the goal of having such an influential effect on his institution. In his role of power and influence, Diego has implemented a vision for diversity at the same time he has established incentives to motivate change. Likewise, Cesar strove for his institution to recruit and retain involved faculty of all backgrounds and he remains active in the hiring processes. Cesar's commitment to providing dedicated and diverse faculty to students was inspired by his own experiences with faculty members. He recalled the support he received from the few Latino professors he worked with as an undergraduate. “Having those Hispanic mentors that you can say, ‘Hey, I want to be like this person and I can be like this person, apparently, because they think I can,’ so then you start building that confidence.”

These professors not only took the time to work with Cesar, but also helped boost his confidence. As a result of his experiences, Cesar has ensured that in his role as president, he can identify and recruit the same kinds of committed faculty members to his campus.

Again, that mentorship, that guidance, just like my family, just like my dad did and my mom. Professors have to go out of their way. They have to move. They have to guide. Here, at [a western U.S. institution], that's what we do. I hire people based on that. I say, "Look, you can know your content, but I just want to make sure that you care about these students and that you're willing to go the extra mile." Otherwise, I wouldn't be here if I hadn't had professors do that to me and I know it works.

As Cesar recalled above, his motivating experiences with faculty reminded him of his parents' support and care of him. As president, he advocated for and expected nothing less than faculty members fully committing themselves to the success of students. In transforming the feel of her institution's environment, Lorena sought to enhance her campus' emphasis on the predominant student population—bilingual and bicultural students. As Lorena worked on her institution's strategic plan, she said she was finally feeling as if she was getting closer to realizing her vision with her institution recently incorporating language that was inclusive of her mostly bicultural and bilingual students. However, she noted that higher education needs to transform itself; an effort that takes much time to be realized. In fact, the change that is needed, according to Lorena, is beyond what is currently happening.

... I don't think any college president out there has even begun to tackle the scale of change that needs to happen within our institutions, and hopefully that our Latino students don't get caught in the middle of. If we can change it so that it works for Latino students, then it works for everybody.

Although access has been a focus of institutions, Lorena continued, it was also critical for efforts to also include guidance and reinforcements for students to make the most of their time in college. This shift is especially important because Latinos know the value of education and once they get through the campus doors, they need more support in determining their paths.

[Higher education leaders] talked about Latinos in terms of numbers, but we've really got to refocus on transforming and converting numbers to talent and converting not from a labor economy, a Latino labor economy ... to one that's driven by brain power. And I think that's something in our Latino community—again, as I said, our families are not stupid. They know that there's a difference in who you become and what you can do if you have an education. They look back and they see others who are non-Latino, so they're not dumb. But it's "how do I get there?"

While Lorena acknowledged that higher education has focused on one part of the problem, getting students into college, she recognized that students are not consistently or effectively supported to identify career options or attain their degrees. She believed Latino students want to succeed, but are not often sure how to succeed; therefore, she is determined to improve her institution's ability to help her Latino students identify and achieve their professional dreams. After many years of attempting to achieve her goals, she believes she is closer than she has ever been to succeeding.

In conclusion, Latino college presidents in this study exhibited passion, commitment, and a clear vision, as they used their resistant capital to challenge

individuals and institutions to reach excellence. With a dedication to maintaining equal access to education, to prevent their institutions from becoming elitist, and to increase their institution's responsiveness to community needs, presidents in this study stood up to their opposition and are seeing the gains that have resulted from taking risks.

An Emerging Form of Capital: Spirituality, Religious Belief, and Faith

As presidents discussed their lives and experiences, another form of capital, spiritual capital, emerged from the data. Elements of spiritual capital, which study participants shared, encompassed religion and faith, as well as personal qualities such as a firm commitment to principles of integrity, honesty and equity, are included in definitions of spirituality (Campesino & Schwartz, 2006; Leak, DeNeve, & Gretemen, 2007). The concept of spirituality also includes compassion or a sense of collective responsibility, the qualities of fairness, and a commitment to family (Campesino & Schwartz, 2006). Latino spirituality, although not always reflective of current religious affiliation or practice, finds its origins in the combination of indigenous religious beliefs and practices of African and Native Indigenous, with European Christianity, most commonly Catholicism (Comas-Diaz, 2012). As they are growing up in their families and communities, Latinos often learn spirituality through exposure to practices and values (Comas-Diaz, 2006). Particularly for Latinos, spirituality guides and defines their relationships with self and others emphasizing responsibility for and membership to their community and culture (Canino & Canino, 1982; Comas-Diaz, 2006; Ruiz, 1997). Furthermore, Latinos express respect generational wisdom and honor by asking for the blessings of elders at the beginning or end of interactions (Cervantes & Ramirez, 1992).

Moreover, spiritual individuals also find meaning in or place value on things beyond themselves (Leak et al., 2007), and many Latinos, according to Diaz-Stevens (as cited in Comas-Diaz, 2006) engage in communitarian spirituality, in which they define themselves through their connection to their communities and culture. Finally, in her discussion of the centrality of spirituality for people of color, Comas-Diaz (2012) highlighted some of the characteristics of spirituality as emphasizing cultural strengths, collective survival and liberation and social justice, among other powerful and shaping characteristics. As a part of their upbringing and cultural experiences and values, Latinos learn about themselves and their place and role within Latino communities in ways that reflect their spiritual influences.

Specifically, in talking about their work or their lives, some presidents referred to God, being Christian, or attending church as being central to the values that they developed. As they talked about their values, study participants emphasized qualities such as compassion for others, honesty, and integrity. Their collective focus on the advancement of Latino and other disadvantaged students and their commitment to social justice and equity further exemplified the presence of spiritual motivators in their work. Last, Latino college presidents in this study discussed how these elements of spirituality were vital components of their leadership and vision, and in this way, impacted their ascent to college presidencies. Accordingly, in the section below, Latino college presidents describe experiences and perspectives that illustrate their spiritual capital.

Hector is president of a medium, public PWI in the western part of the United States. Over the course of a 40-year career span in higher education, he has held diverse

professional roles. As he talked about his background and experiences, Hector put forth that his Cuban background has been critical in shaping his values and beliefs. As a result of his background and experiences, his loyalty to family is critically important, as is his commitment to providing others with the educational opportunities from which he benefitted. He believed that living by example is the way he and most people effect change in others' lives. As Hector shared his experiences, he revealed more about the spiritual strengths that carried him and his work to new levels.

I have had a diverse career working for a foundation, in government, business, and higher education. I also worked for a TV station part-time as their international correspondent. It was not your more typical academic trajectory of somebody who becomes a faculty member, a department chair, a dean, a provost, and then president. Mine is a lot more tortuous. The years I worked at the University of [a southern state], between '66 and '70 were some of my best formative years. I enjoyed the atmosphere. And even in all the jobs I had, I always kept a hand in higher education. I served as director of internship for the [western U.S.] city in relation to the University of [a southern U.S. city] and other universities.

I always had a strong interest, but I felt very comfortable in the academy and it felt like something I could make a contribution because really, I'm from Cuba originally. I'm Cuban first. I was born in Cuba, part of a Cuban family, pretty rooted in Cuban culture. I suppose that is my primary orientation, and then you put on that sort of a more general orientation, which is being, if you're in

certain parts of the country, Hispanic, or in other parts, Latino, and it's part of who I am, my cultural background, part of my philosophical and religious orientation. Once I open my mouth, everybody knows I wasn't born in this country. I have an accent and it is clear that I do. I probably don't fit the stereotype of somebody who—it depends on where you are in the United States—thinks what a Latino should look like, but clearly it is in my DNA. It's who I am. I came to this country when I was about 14 and a half years old with a dime in my pocket and a change of underwear. It's because of education that I was able to get a very good higher education and accomplish that. It was also a way for me to do what education did for me to help others do it for them.

My father was a lawyer. My mother was a librarian. Therefore, I come from a house where books were everywhere. ... Therefore, I think I have had from very early on the value of knowledge and inquisitive in being a voracious kind of reader. I think the value of that is I don't go to the bathroom without a book or a newspaper or the shampoo bottle to read in the back. I think that's a strong value that was given to me in my family, the value of knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge. My father and mother were very hard workers. They were determined hard workers, both in their own ways.

I think you have to have this level of ... persistence. You don't get things by wishing things. You get things by working at it and working at it consistently and disciplined and long. "Things don't come easy, but if you work hard at it, they'll come" ... was another value given to us. And last but not least, I think it

was the value that you are because of what your values are, not because of what your family name is. I think those were values given to us by family and by my culture. Many of those [values] were also reinforced by the school I went to. I went to a very good primary school run by Marist Brothers, a Catholic school, and I think those very same values were enforced by my 8 years of schooling I spent in Cuba in that Catholic school.

Cubans in particular—and I know more about Cuba than any other places—Cubans do not have a great deal of loyalty to anything but themselves and the family. They do not particularly have great loyalties to institutions, i.e., the church, government, etc., but we have a great deal of loyalty to the family. I came to the United States without my parents. By the time my parents came, it was probably 8 years after I had left Cuba, but the presence of my family, even though they were not here, in my life and in my thoughts and in my commitment to go to college, to be honest, came strictly from promises that I made to my family and breaking them would have been breaking that relationship with the family. When I left Cuba, I made a promise to my parents that I would go to college. I didn't know when, how, or where, just that I would go, and I knew that if I didn't fulfill that promise that I would commit great injury to that promise to my parents, and I was not willing to do that. So their presence, even though they were not physically present, but their moral and intellectual presence pushed me to achieve and to be disciplined about it. In my work, I pride loyalty a great deal and I pride discipline a great deal and I pride honesty a great deal. Therefore I

tend to maintain those same values with the people I work closely with and I see the rewards for it.

There are a number of values that helped me become president. First, you have to be honest 100% of the time. When everything fails, try honesty because if you are even giving the perception of not being fully honest, it catches up with you pretty quickly and your word is doubted. I think you have to be a visionary. I think you have to imagine what the institution should be x years from now and how to get there. Third, you have to have the values that love is good. It's not something that's going to happen all the time; part of the job is to have critics and just accept that. They have their place. Sometimes they help you get better. But don't expect to be loved by everybody. (I'd advise potential presidents to) have values and be consistent. Be very, very consistent. What your vision for the institution is should be a consistent vision and people should know where you are at all times, not having to guess where you might be.

I think you get challenged on [your] values almost from the day you arrive at an institution. I came to this institution and before I got here, I came and my vice president for finance, who is still working for me, came to me and said, "You know. Dr. Estrada," this is in May. "Beginning July 1st, you don't have enough money to buy toilet paper." My thing is, "Okay. Well, we need to buy toilet paper and we need to make some reorganization of the institution to survive these difficult financial times." We have been doing that for [over 15] years. You realize that you have to have those set of inner strength and compasses of who

you are from probably before you get into the institution because you are going to be consistently tested for it. This is a job where you go from difficult times to crisis times back to difficult times on a consistent basis. That's what they pay you for. That's why you are selected: because you are supposed to know how to handle these things, and you have to be pretty well grounded in your values. If not, you flounder. As president of a university, if you flounder, your time is short. It's not something you say "Oh, today, I look in the mirror and this happened." I think it's something you bring to the job and keep honing it almost on a daily basis.

My examples and my experiences [of how being multicultural and multilingual contribute to my work in higher education] are not related to just one single community or one single group. I am able to listen to different voices and to nuances in different voices because of being multicultural and multilingual and I think sometimes those nuances are—no matter what language you are, etc., being aware of those things is pretty important to get behind the façade and to see what really is going on. Those sensitivities, because of your multiculturalism and multilingualism, help you understand things better and get to what the real issues are and not be as distracted as much by the façade but look at what is behind the façade.

[In speaking on behalf of a cause] I have had to be honest, and not just here but in other opportunities. I have had enough of a presence in the jobs I have had, etc., to be able to have a bit of a bully pulpit kind of activity and I have

spoken about things that should be and should not be. When I was in television, I was very helpful in bringing greater awareness to Hispanics in television. I'm not a great believer that what you do or say makes for immediate, revolutionary, dramatic change, but it does help over time turn the wheels of change. But I'm not sure that you do that by one single action, but by simply a continuation of examples of your own life and being aware that not everybody looks and acts and is treated equally, and be able to stand for that and say, "But you can be successful and this is important."

I'd like to see more people who come from different backgrounds become chief executive of universities. I think they add to the strength of the institution. I would like to see more Latino presidents and other types of people—I have also had the chance to hire as a provost an Argentinian, a Scotsman, an Iranian, and a Jew. And I think that having that awareness that they all bring great differences and great experiences and they're not just narrow in their approach and their experiences, it helps the institution. I would like to see that continue.

Through his life examples, Hector's compassion, focus on a greater purpose, honor and honesty were critical features of his approach and leadership presence. These examples of spiritual capital were directed inward as well as outward. As an individual, Hector possessed an immense respect for honesty and looked for that quality in others. He viewed keeping his word to go to college as essential not only to honoring his parents, but also to keeping his connection to them while they were apart. He acknowledged that his family taught him that his values and actions, such as keeping his word and being

loyal to his family, were more critical to defining him as a person than his lineage. Furthermore, his commitment to the greater cause of equality of opportunity reflected his desire to help others in his community achieve their dreams. Moreover, in his work, he displayed his sense of responsibility for all students and colleagues by enhancing his institution's ability to welcome them and support their success. Consequently, as Hector's values guided the thoughtful and community-minded way in which he led his life, he manifested the spiritual strengths of his Latino background.

Like Hector, the other presidents in this study shared elements of their approach or values that reflected spirituality and saw their families as motivating these perspectives. Some Latino college presidents talked about attending church or learning their religious beliefs from their parents. Others noted qualities, such as integrity and honesty, as values their parents prized and emphasized to them as children. For example, when, as a child, Cesar received the wrong amount of change from the cashier at the store, his father drove him back to the store to return the funds with the strong message that there could be negative consequences to others if he was not honest. Cesar acknowledged that this situation was a catalyst for him learning the value of honesty and integrity. Similarly, Eduardo highlighted how his family emphasized having "indisputable ethics" that now "anchor" his work and approach in higher education.

The power of parents and families in shaping study participants values also included faith and religion. As a result of his parents' religious practices and living "a life for Christ," Jorge was able to understand and appreciate their faith, and ultimately, adopt it as his own. Jacinto noted the longstanding connection to faith that Latino families have

had and talked about it being a core value for him that he learned from some of the most influential mentors in his life. Moreover, Eduardo recognized that he learned the values of “being good to people” and “do[ing] unto others as you would have them do unto you” from his home life. Finally, the challenging circumstances their families and communities experienced were also driving forces and inspirations for study participants as they focused their efforts on increasing access to opportunities, creating welcoming campus environments, and addressing disparities that impacted Latinos and others in their communities. In conclusion, as presidents talked about their lives as Latinos, they recounted the lessons they learned, many of which reflected the spiritual values of their parents, community, and culture.

Latino college presidents in this study incorporated the spiritual values and approaches they learned from their upbringing into their work in higher education. Five elements of spirituality surfaced in stories about study participants’ experiences: religiosity and faith, integrity and honesty, treating others with respect, compassion, and having a greater purpose. In the section below, I explore each of these spiritual qualities and the ways they were illustrated in the philosophies or practices of the Latino college presidents in this study.

Raul described the dual nature of his religious values as an integral part of his cultural upbringing as well as a moral compass directing his decisions:

I believe that culture influences us very much because my family has a very strong Latino culture, our values, our religious background. All those things have a way of helping you to make the key decisions that—if you don’t have strong

values, then you're going to make the wrong decision because you're making it on a practical basis rather than what's right or what's wrong.

In his experience, Raul saw the religious influences and values he obtained from his family as critical to making ethical decisions as a leader. In sum, as a result of their exposure to religious practice or beliefs in their Latino families, Latino college presidents adopted values that reflected their belief in a higher power, their responsibility to be a good person by treating others with respect, and their sense of right and wrong in their work and in their lives. Equipped with these faith-based values, study participants approached their communities with a sense of family and duty, often committing themselves to providing opportunities to Latinos and other underrepresented populations.

Religiosity and faith. The importance of religion and faith in the lives of study participants was evident not only in their recollections of their childhoods, but also in their stories of their current experiences. Three of the 14 presidents in this study led a faith-based institution. Of the 3 presidents of faith-based institutions, two noted that the religious nature of the institution is what drew them to that institution. The remaining president talked about her faith rather than her religiosity as being a key influence in her life. Other presidents noted the importance of faith principles in their lives. As a whole, the prominence of faith or involvement in religious institutions was illustrated in the stories of many Latino college presidents in this study.

As a part of his faith, Jorge noted his reliance on God for guidance in his career and life. As president of a faith-based institution, Jorge felt called to do the work of leading the institution:

But I think the most significant move for me in my career was ... when I came to this very poor and financially troubled institution, and challenges of all kinds to be able to move us forward, but I really felt a call from God to really come and be a part of this institution. ... For me personally, I've always really trusted God for his direction in my life.

Jorge's relationship with and faith in God was not only central to his values but also guided his professional direction. Similarly, Jacinto, who is also president of a faith-based institution and very involved with religious organizations in his community, saw his religious beliefs and appreciation for *familia* reflected at his institution. Although leading and being a part of religious institutions was key to only a minority of the presidents participating in this study, as illustrated below, other elements of spirituality permeated the lives of all study participants.

Integrity and honesty. All the presidents communicated their value for ethical behavior and practices. Specifically, Latino college presidents in this study admired the qualities of integrity and honesty and noted that these virtues played significant roles in their lives and careers. In discussing values that have helped her professionally, Lorena talked about integrity, truth-telling, and faith.

I go back to faith. In retrospect, now as I've learned more, I think my grandmother may have been one of the lost Jews. There's this whole thing around the Latino Jewish community. So I've kind of gone back and I've remembered now, doing things Friday at sundown. ... The value of integrity, you don't go back on your word. You honor the family name. Just that whole thing of integrity.

Truth-telling. I have to tell you, I think one of our biggest dysfunctions in colleges and universities now, right now, is just the absence of simple truth-telling.

For Lorena, integrity took on a more powerful role as it was linked to family and honor. For her, the importance of individuals keeping promises and maintaining integrity was magnified because of potential negative ramifications on a family's reputation. Furthermore, as a family member, she felt it was her obligation to honor the family name in every endeavor. As Lorena recalled her experiences, she suggested that a lack of integrity results in dysfunctions in institutions, reinforcing the view that integrity is a valuable quality for her and other higher education leaders. Similarly, Cesar noted that he learned from his father the negative impact a lack of honesty and integrity could have on his community. These enduring values have become key components of Cesar's leadership and his caring for the Latino community's success. As an example, when he thought about his impact on the community and how he would like to be viewed when he retires he said,

I want people to realize hey, this guy was passionate and he cared. He cared about all people in our society, but especially those people that don't have those opportunities and that we have to educate in order to make this country great again.

Although Cesar's early and lasting lesson about integrity focused on his commitment to having a positive impact on the community, other presidents commented that having "unquestionable ethics" was key to pushing their institutions to address equity

issues. Luis recalled how he handled contentions at his institution as a midlevel administrator:

When I got to maybe halfway through my tenure at Transcript State University because there were a lot of things going on there that tested your ethical behavior, your view of the relationship of the university to faculty, to students. I was involved with—the fire-bombings of faculty offices by faculty in the Chicano Studies Department. They were having a war amongst themselves. While a lot of it was their fault, it was also the university's fault, it was the dean's fault because they didn't care and so they didn't watch what they were doing. So it finally escalated to a point of eruption. I told the president, "Yeah, they're doing it, but this is what allowed it to happen." So being open and upfront about things like that I think gets you to think about what your ethics are, what your values are in terms of community, to community, to people that work for you, and things like that. That's what I think helps you be a successful administrator.

As an administrator with knowledge of faculty members' reactions to discord with their dean, Luis felt a responsibility to admit to his understanding of events while also attempting to address the issues that had escalated. Much like Luis, Ruben saw his integrity as central to his role as an administrator. For Ruben, integrity was critical in decision-making that impacts others negatively.

I think that when you have to make a tough decision that affects somebody else negatively, but it is the right decision, that's a challenge. But if you're approaching those kinds of situations with integrity and doing an honest job in

analyzing what you need to do, it's never—that's not the problem. The problem is simply something that you have with the negative decision that you might have to make. Certainly, with positive decisions, everything's okay. But you need to have that integrity and that thoroughness in your decision-making processes when you have to make decisions that might adversely affect or do adversely affect other people.

As is the case with other leaders, Ruben pondered the challenges of making decisions that adversely affect others. He felt some comfort in being thorough and using integrity to make those difficult decisions. Similarly, Luis used this sense of ethics as a compass to guide his decisions when dealing with a campus crisis. When he was trying to determine how to respond to an attack on one of his student populations via Facebook, Luis first turned to his legal counsel, but then fell back on his concern and responsibility for the well-being of his students.

Even here, just a case in point, probably 2 or 3 years ago, we had an incident on campus where there were some things posted on Facebook and derogatory comments about some of the ethnic students on campus, and threats, and because it was on a certain website, the question was, do we disconnect access to that website on the campus and in the dormitories? My legal counsel comes in and she said, "Well, there's this precedent and there's this case" and I have students very concerned from those ethnic minority populations about what's being done, and my response to her is "Thank you very much for your advice and your legal research, but my responsibility is to the well-being of the students and not

whatever legal precedent you're advising me on. My responsibility is to make sure our students are protected. So based on that, I'm going to ask my IT folks to block the site." I figured that I had an ethical responsibility to protect my students, as opposed to worrying about what the legal implications were.

With his perspective of being responsible for protecting members of his community, Luis made a decision that prioritized his students' well-being over legal precedent. In making his decision, he highlighted the importance of providing timely support to students who felt attacked, despite there being a history of how similar decisions have been made at other institutions. Finally, he felt justified in his decision because it was based on what he felt was his ethical obligation to support his students.

Like Ruben and Luis, many other study participants valued honesty and integrity, not just because these qualities allowed them to approach situations ethically, but also because these values allowed them to lead with a concern for the well-being of others. With this community-centered view of their behavior and values, these presidents proceeded to face challenging situations with truthfulness and caring.

Treating others with fairness and respect. As Latino college presidents in this study relayed their experiences, their faith, honesty, and integrity were directed toward their communities' well-being. Latino college presidents wanted to behave and be seen as "good people" who listened to their campus community members. Accordingly, respecting others and treating them with fairness were essential qualities of presidents in this study. Andres talked about respect for diversity on his campus.

I've always said when I came to [this institution], I said that the only statement that I can accept for diversity of whatever is to say that we respect every person, period, you know, regardless of anything. So I've always been a spokesperson. I have always spoken about respecting everyone and I think that does lead to change. It's taking a very proactive stand for inclusion and respect for everyone, and that carries on in the way that I do things.

Andres' value for others is an active part of his leadership approach and interactions with his campus community. He leads by example, whereas he holds members of his institution accountable, appreciating the differences that everyone brings by creating a space for all of them to succeed. In the same way, Jorge communicated his acceptance, care, and respect for people from all backgrounds.

But the greatest value, of course, is being able to love people more than anything else, of whatever faith or religion or culture they come from, just understanding that the Scripture—because my mind is John 3:16, “Where for God, so loved the world.” So that's something that's very important to me and it's something I guide my life by, as well.

As he described his love of all people regardless of background, Jorge's use of scripture emphasized the guiding force of religion in his life, personally and professionally. The respect that presidents in this study had for others also translated into their ability to connect with people from various backgrounds or at different professional levels. To study participants, treating others respectfully, regardless of their status or

position, was a highly regarded quality. Jacinto recalled his father treating people from different classes equally and what that meant to him.

He knew you and he respected you, and he loved you for who you were, unless you gave him a reason not to. I think that quality, more than any single one, is one that I would like to believe that my father passed on to me through his mentorship of me, this joy for life and this belief in people.

From his father's interactions with others, Jacinto discovered an appreciation and respect for everyone. As he continued to think about the exposure that he had to people from different backgrounds and the value that his family placed on everyone, he admitted that this value impacted his ascent to a presidency.

So people from varying economic or social strata were in my home, different ethnic backgrounds were in my home, different faith backgrounds were in my home. So the milieu that I grew up in transcended those "barriers"—I use the word barriers. I had to put them in quotes there because I never saw them as such. So that was certainly a value that I believe helped me ascend to the presidency, as well, because I think great academic leaders have to understand that about fellow men and women, that there is inherent value in all men and women, and I think it's something that great educators should always be proponents of. So that's something that they certainly instilled in me as well.

Jacinto learned acceptance and appreciation of others from the home environment his parents created and maintained. These experiences have not only shaped his own perspective on others, but have also solidified his view of the values of inclusiveness and

acceptance that all effective leaders should possess. Similarly, as Clarissa shared her strongest values as president, she highlighted her respect for people “at all levels.” Diego also emphasized his regard for and connection to staff members at different professional levels. He believed his connection to his staff members as a Latino and as a first-generation college student is a unique quality for a college president. For Diego and the other presidents that shared the same value, their ability to have a conversation and get to know staff members with whom they would not normally interact in their daily work was also a point of pride. Additionally, presidents believed that their interactions and relationships with the gardener or other staff members acknowledged and expressed the value of these staff members as key contributors to the campus community. Eduardo, for example, talked about engendering trust and good will by creating a sense of community and making himself accessible to all members of his campus community.

Again, it’s intuitive, and that is that if you treat the people that are your custodians with the same level of respect that you treat the people that are your vice presidents, then that engenders a relationship that can be used effectively to incur change with support.

As part of his role as president, Eduardo felt it was necessary for him to have a strong presence on his campus and to connect with all of his staff members, thereby expressing his respect for them. Moreover, when it came to the level of respect he showed for staff members or colleagues at different levels organizationally, he did not differentiate; he approached everyone with the same level of appreciation and respect.

Subsequently, the relationships he built provide him with leverage that reinforced his change efforts.

Even though they had made it to the senior post, Latino college presidents held a high level of respect for all of their colleagues and staff members, regardless of level, and wanted to express that respect as much as possible. This concept of respect for others was also discussed in the ways Latino college presidents committed themselves to a sense of fairness. Themes of equity and social justice were common among the goals of presidents participating in this study. Diego's move into administration was inspired by the concept that, as an administrator, he could impact disparities in the curriculum, student body, and faculty. Similarly, Raul credited his focus on social justice as a guide in his career path. Jose's passion to advocate for others who are facing unfair treatment was also reflected in his approach to addressing injustices.

I've taken positions with people of noncolor, or White people, if you will, when I felt they were being treated unfairly by certain groups. So I think I made a little bit of a difference by making people see that it's silly to engage in that kind of battle.

For Jose, advocating for fair treatment of others was not exclusively for minority communities, but for anyone experiencing bias. As presidents in this study chose careers, addressed injustices, or impacted the development of curriculum at their institutions or the recruitment of diverse students and staff members, they sought to create institutions that afforded everyone an equal opportunity to compete and succeed.

One of the key equity issues discussed by Latino college presidents was related to student success. Two presidents addressed the achievement gap or disparate treatment as areas in which they tried to create equal opportunities. Cesar responded to his state's unwillingness to disaggregate data to determine the severity of issues for certain communities.

Cesar's efforts led the state to address the academic achievement gap by implementing school-district improvements. Latino college presidents dedicated much time and energy toward achieving equal access to opportunities and resources. Speaking pragmatically about equal access to education and services, Luis mentioned why he believes everyone is entitled to these benefits. "Philosophically, my approach has always been that everybody is a taxpayer. It doesn't matter what your economic situation is. So everybody's entitled to receiving services from public institutions like universities, rather than push them away." According to Luis' view, while everyone may pay equally for services, distribution of or access to resources was not equal. As a result, Luis partnered with Latino legislators who were being elected in higher numbers, to provide them with informational workshops about the higher education budget, so that these new legislators could more effectively request support for local initiatives and communities. With this approach, Luis was able to redirect the benefits of citizens' tax dollars back to them.

Finally, as presidents in this study sought to treat others with fairness and respect, they reflected these values not only in their interactions, but also in their decision making. With their commitment to justice and access to opportunities for all, Cesar and other

presidents affected and are continuing to influence much needed changes at their institutions and in their communities.

Compassion. During their interviews each Latino president, like Pedro, talked about their concern for their communities and their desire to better the prospects or conditions for others, most often Latino students and communities.

People get a sense that I'm genuine, honest, and that I listen to them, and that I don't make rash decisions without thinking about the consequences to other individuals, that I'm less concerned about my own sense of legacy and how am I going to be viewed. I'm more interested in what's good for the institution. And that's kind of been what has guided me throughout all these years.

As he talked about what informs his definition of what a good president is, Diego highlighted the ability to listen and empathize with others as key qualities of executive leaders. This compassion for others not only reflected Latino presidents' ability to identify with others, but also their interest and commitment to contributing to improved circumstances and opportunities. With the experience of being a first-generation college student, Diego talked about his reason to move from a faculty role to an administrative role: "Look, if I'm in that position, I can do a lot more for students and faculty than if I'm a faculty member working one-on-one, one person at a time."

As a faculty member, Diego knew that students were still facing challenges outside his classroom and that the only way he could reduce those obstacles was by becoming an administrator and controlling resources. This care for his students drove his career in its current direction, as he noted in describing one of his defining moments.

I consciously made the decision to move into administration. That's a huge, huge jump and I did not do it, not because of the—it wasn't driven by ego. It was driven by really wanting to do good and help other Latinos and I've been able to do that.

When Diego moved into his first jobs in administration, the first as chair of his department and the second as assistant to the president, he thought he could have a broader impact on Latinos, and he has been able to do that by using his authority and influence to ensure diversity was reflected in hiring and curricular decisions. For reasons similar to those of Diego, Eduardo was driven into administration with the vision that he could have a positive influence on a larger number of students. Although he enjoyed his success as a high school teacher, Eduardo had a pivotal conversation with one of his faculty mentors.

Initially, I said, "No, I can't leave the kids. They're expecting me to do well here with them," and I decided that I would not take that opportunity. And he asked me the question that probably changed my professional life. He said, "Just think of how many more kids you could have an impact on if you taught 25 people to do what you do." So that made ultimate sense to me.

As a result of his advisor's encouragement that he envision his potential effect on more students, Eduardo set off to graduate school with the goal of leading teacher-education efforts. Consequently, as they became more aware of the need for increased support and intervention for their students, Eduardo, Diego, and other presidents in this study shifted their professional course toward one of greater influence and authority.

Moreover, once in these executive-leadership roles, presidents like Luis sought other opportunities, such as mentoring or participating in studies, to assist others in higher education and his community.

I think the other thing—I don't know whether it's a value or not—the ability to support other people in—and that's why I'm involved in sort of mentoring people in higher ed, and when somebody asks me to participate in a program that does that, I usually go ahead and do it because I think it's important to do, whether they're Latinos or not.

Luis' compassion and respect for others was a result of his upbringing. He learned from his dad that being educated had less to do with academics and more to do with how he treated and helped others. Similarly, as a high school student, Jorge was inspired by his father volunteering at his school in the Spanish club and other culturally focused activities. He noted that having his father so involved in ethnic and cultural activities with students inspired him to become more active in high school and to keep connected to his Latino roots. As Jorge talked about his long-term dedication to supporting Latino students, he talked about the many ways he has tried to provide them needed resources.

So there are many, many students that dream the dream of going to school but just don't have the resources, the family background, the opportunities to be able to go to school. So I think in the 25 years I've been involved in higher education, I've really worked hard to be able to give advantages to the disadvantaged Latino students, whether it be by raising money or finding scholarships, or providing

scholarships or just helping them understand the application process that are involved in applying to school and/or financial aid applications, as well.

In various ways, Jorge has used his professional roles to provide information and resources to Latino students. Like Jorge, other Latino college presidents in this study shared their concern for Latino students and the many ways that this caring for their community was inspired and manifested. They remained steadfast in their dedication to change disadvantaged circumstances and they found a number of ways to respond. As a result, more campuses and communities became aware of the academic crises facing Latino students as well as the potential resolutions to this reality.

Greater purpose. Related to the quality of compassion, Latino college presidents in this study noted a greater purpose for their work and their goals that extended beyond their roles. Their mission was related to their communities, to providing opportunities and a helping hand, and ultimately, changing the current educational disparities that their communities experienced. As discussed earlier, Clarissa provided educational access to college for underserved students by creating a dual-enrollment program that provided underrepresented students with exposure to the academic environment and resources they needed to succeed. Similarly committed to improving access to his institution, Andres spoke about his enrollment goals:

Building an institution that reflects the area that we live in [is] important ... so we can continue to diversify and grow as the Hispanic population graduates from high schools and get into college tracks, and they will start going to us more and more.

Andres envisioned his institution being a closer reflection of the diversity of the surrounding community. As he forecasted the increase of Hispanic high school graduates, he anticipated the work that his institution would have to accomplish to attract those students. In reflecting on their roles in higher education, some presidents talked about feeling a sense of duty to pursue careers in the field. Lorena credited her family with inspiring her commitment to creating opportunities for Latinos and others.

For me, personally, I have an obligation to fulfill to my family and so it's been an obligation that I've had to educate myself, but then also to do something worthwhile with it that changes opportunities for people in my community and most especially on a personal level, for my Latino community.

The gratefulness that Lorena and other presidents in this study felt for the love and support of their families and its role in their subsequent success was transferred to their wish to provide similar supports and opportunities to others. It was with this in mind that Pedro "realized that now not only do I understand these values and really embrace them, but now I have the opportunity and the obligation to see how I could translate them into university policy and decision-making." The appreciation went deeper for other presidents, in that they wanted to convert their sometimes unwelcoming or unsupportive institutional environments to spaces where Latino students could integrate themselves and thrive. For one president, Jorge, that gratitude felt like a calling for him to go to a smaller, underfunded institution.

Probably more than anything else, I would say, for me, most recently, the most significant moment was me coming here [a few] years ago. I just really felt a

calling. I was at [a] great place, big school, a lot of money and it was very easy. It was a very comfortable job. But I think a significant move for me in my career was [a few] years ago when I came to this very poor and financially troubled institution, and challenges of all kinds to be able to move us forward, but I really felt a call from God to really come and be a part of this institution.

So that is probably the one thing that God has called me here more than anything else is to be able to continue to tell the story. And that value of being able to tell the story, to capture their hearts and minds and hopefully their dollars, as well, to the point of being able to give to the school.

The calling that Jorge felt had not only compelled him to accept a job with an institution, but as he noted, it had shaped the focus of his 25-year career in higher education.

I guess for all the years that I've been in higher education, the thing that I've spoke for is just the need to continue to educate Hispanic students, the need for it, the need for more Hispanic leaders, the need for educated Hispanic people, Latinos to be educated. That's just a constant battle. It's been a constant thing for me in all the years I've been in higher education, to help students realize the importance of education and where it'll take you. So I think it's very important, and the challenge that I've had for me is just continue to tell students, Latino students and Spanish students, the need for an education, the possibilities that could happen in their life with an education.

Jorge's unwavering commitment to Latinos educating themselves was fueled by his personal knowledge of the opportunities that an education provides to Latinos.

Although Jorge recalled a long history of involvement and connection with his Latino community, Jacinto had felt a disconnection as he grew up in predominantly White areas. Understanding the isolating impact of the lack of community, Jacinto sought to help Latino students connect to their culture and learn about its impact on their experience in the United States.

I think part and parcel too what I see in terms of my own leadership responsibility to help Latino students, students of all backgrounds, but I feel a special obligation and tie, and responsibility, and privilege, frankly, to help Latino students understand their place in American society, and their own roots, and how their culture speaks to their experience.

As a leader, Jacinto was motivated by his role in educating Latino students about their heritage and how their culture impacts their experience in this country. This duty was not an onerous task but one he seemed genuinely honored to be able to do. In sum, while presidents were advancing in higher education, they felt a responsibility to carve a path for others by mentoring and educating others and addressing inequities. Overall, through their sense of obligation, commitment to fairness, and giving back to their communities, Latino college presidents aimed to make their roles meaningful to themselves, their institutions, and others. These qualities, combined with their religious faith and vision for equity, comprised the spiritual strengths of their cultural background.

In conclusion, as Latino college presidents participating in this study recounted their personal and professional experiences, they shed light on the ways their families had provided them with the values and tools they needed to succeed. Some of those cultural

assets they gained from their backgrounds provided them with the ability to understand, communicate, and connect with a wide range individuals and communities. Other forms of cultural strengths directed study participants' professional and life goals. As they reflected on the many lessons they had learned and the skills they possessed, they revealed not only a sense of indebtedness to their families for those assets, but also attributed their professional commitment to equity, access, and justice to their experiences and love of *familia*.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Meeting the 14 Latino presidents who participated in this study was a moving experience. As I spoke to each leader, I sensed a familiarity, the connection I had been searching for in higher education, for many years. It was as if I had stumbled on a community of like-minded individuals who had carved out clear goals and derived a sense of purpose, motivated by their family and their experiences growing up Latino. It did not matter that we did not all grow up in the same geographic regions or similar financial or religious circumstances. What mattered is that we felt an unconditional regard for family and a common responsibility to our community. We have found meaning in using our lives to make higher education a better experience for the next generation. Our campuses are like our homes that we open up to new guests, striving to make them feel comfortable and to make the most of their time with us, hoping they feel better and more connected upon leaving our company. In each president I saw the confidence and comfort in that space. It is with that strength that each of them has advocated for others and created environments that have allowed others to begin to tap into their own gifts. This experience has not changed me as much as it has allowed me to reach inside myself and finally see the different parts of who I am

and who my family and my community have shaped me to be. At this moment, I am clear that it is not the struggle that defines who we are, it is our familia.

The primary purpose of this research was to better understand how cultural background played a role in supporting Latino college presidents' ascent to leadership roles in higher education. Specifically, this study sought to determine the ways cultural values translated into cultural assets or cultural capital that Latino college presidents were able to use to their advantage in their careers. With Yosso's (2005) community-cultural-wealth framework (2005) as the basis, this study explored the presence or use of the six forms of capital by study participants and the ways various Latino cultural values inspired specific forms of capital. Specifically, this study explored three ways Latino college presidents used their cultural backgrounds to (a). ascend to leadership roles, (b) navigate through challenges that they faced in higher education, and (c) guide their approach and view their roles in higher education. The composite impact of cultural background was explored to highlight its pervasiveness and its usefulness in the professional lives of Latino administrators. Training programs and support for Latino senior leaders in higher education could incorporate comprehensive information about the ways the strengths derived from cultural background could be fostered, supported, and valued.

Summary of the Study

In this study, I sought to better understand the role of cultural background as a strength and facilitator to Latino presidents' success. Although the literature review provided some insight about the role cultural values played in Latino college presidents'

ascent to executive-leadership roles (Mata, 1997; Muñoz, 2008; Ramos, 2008; Rodriguez, 2005), it did not examine the specific ways that culture translated into strengths, skills, or approaches that could lead to professional advancement. I chose the community-cultural-wealth framework (Yosso, 2005), which is rooted in CRT, because I wanted to focus on culture as a strength of Latino college presidents, at the same time that I wanted to acknowledge the racially oppressive environments they have faced and continue to face in academia (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Specifically, the community-cultural-wealth model presents six forms of cultural capital that people of color possess and that they bring to any setting of which they are part. Complementing my use of CRT was LatCrit, which goes beyond CRT in that it emphasizes the unique oppressions that Latinos face due to language, immigration, culture, ethnicity and sexuality (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Accordingly, to ensure that my study honored the Latino voices and experiences of research participants, I incorporated the use of *testimonios* (Huber, 2009a): narratives told by marginalized communities to obtain stories of their lived experiences. Using this approach, I worked with research participants to more fully and accurately capture a snapshot of their lived experiences.

This study used multiple methods for data collection. Interviews provided qualitative data about specific experiences and perspectives of study participants, whereas a demographics survey provided quantitative data about their personal characteristics. Through the use of these multiple data sources, a more comprehensive description of the population of Latino college presidents at four year institutions was

possible. Consequently, the multiple data-collection methods helped to more thoroughly answer the research questions (R. B. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The key findings of this study illustrated how important cultural values and family influences were to the lives and career success of study participants. Specifically, cultural values were central to each form of capital in the community-cultural-wealth framework. Although some cultural values represented the form of capital (i.e., value for family = familial capital), other cultural values resulted in a form of capital (i.e., value for fairness and equity = resistant capital). Another example of this is Latino's cultural value of connection to others motivating and facilitating their creation of community and networks or social capital. Throughout their stories and descriptions of their experiences, Latino college presidents in this study illuminated the ways that cultural values represented or supported their development of capital. This study also found support for Huber's (2009a) finding that spiritual capital could be added to the community-cultural-wealth framework, bringing the forms of capital to a total of seven. Furthermore, in their reflections of their childhood, educational, and professional experiences, study participants illuminated the pivotal role of their families, emphasizing how their families were central to the development of their skills, values, and strengths.

All presidents who agreed to participate completed a demographics questionnaire that highlighted the commonalities as well as the diversity in this population in their ethnic and cultural background as well as their educational experiences. The majority of presidents participating in this study were men. Although half of the study participants identified as Mexican/Chicano and the remaining identified themselves as being of other

Latino origins, most of them 11 of the 14 identified their race as White. Their racial identification as White might have reflected the fact that the majority of them, 11 of 14, were born in the United States or it might reflect their their bi-cultural skills or experiences. For instance, with much experience navigating two cultures and spending much time within American institutions, study participants may feel more integrated and a part of American culture and therefore, more closely identify with being White, the predominant race in higher education.

All of the presidents participating in this study attended most of their K–12 and postsecondary education in the United States. However, most of them, nine of the 14, were first-generation college students. With respect to their backgrounds, although there were some differences among study participants, the majority of their education and upbringing occurred in the United States, underscoring the extent of their bicultural experiences. Despite study participants' extensive exposure to American culture in elementary and secondary education, as first-generation college students, they and their families lacked familiarity with postsecondary institutions and the culture of higher education in general.

Although part of the questionnaire revealed study participants' influences before their higher education careers, another part of the survey illuminated their experiences once they entered the field. Latino college presidents participating in this study provided information about their experiences in the field of education, revealing the longevity, roles, and similarities among their career paths. Study participants averaged 33 years in higher education and their careers ranged from 21 to over 40 years in the field. Half of

the presidents started their higher education careers in a teaching or teaching-related role as an instructor, faculty member, or teaching assistant. The other half of presidents started their careers in such roles as program developer, admissions counselor, or academic advisor. Despite the varied ways presidents started their academic careers, the majority of participants, 10, noted that their role prior to a presidency was as vice president, provost, or vice chancellor, further illustrating the common pathways to a presidency.

As a whole, the characteristics and experiences of Latino college presidents, as noted in their responses to the questionnaire, highlighted the diversity as well as the commonalities shared among this group. Although all identified with their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, the majority were also born in the United States and in this way were exposed to, if not wholly part of, American culture, and particularly the American educational system. Despite their experiences with American primary and secondary education systems, the majority of presidents in this study contended with the challenges associated with being first-generation college students. Whereas twice as many (six of the nine) of those who were the first in their families to go to college started their higher education careers as instructors or faculty members, the majority (four of five) of those whose parents had gone to college commenced their careers in the field in other roles, such as admissions counselor or center director. Although they took various paths to embark on a higher education career, for all of them, the road to a presidency was long, taking an average of 20 years.

Discussion

The following section addresses the findings for the research question and three subquestions, and presents conclusions. The first part of this section comprises the key findings of this study and the primary research question and proposes changes to Yosso's community-cultural-wealth framework. Next, I present and discuss data about specific ways cultural values supported Latino college presidents' professional experiences and ascent in the field of higher education. Finally, this chapter ends with the implications of the findings from this study and recommendations for future areas of study.

Research Question: What Factors Promote Success for Latino College Presidents?

Although this study sought to explore the cultural strengths of Latino college presidents, it was premised on the struggles of these leaders, which were catalysts to the development of those strengths. According to this view, it was when Latinos faced obstacles that they drew strategies and skills from their cultural reserves to combat these difficulties. My interviews with Latino college presidents about their cultural backgrounds and their professional experiences yielded a somewhat different reality. Latino college presidents spoke proudly of their parents, their experiences, the values they had learned, and the ways they viewed or approached professional scenarios. They were inspired by wanting more for themselves, their families, and communities. They were motivated by the example of their parents. They used their communication skills to create a sense of community and possibilities for change. As a result of Latino college presidents' assets and support networks, the obstacles or challenges they faced were merely part of their whole experience, rather than defining factors.

The interviews with Latino college presidents revealed that their parents, families, and communities provided them with structure, cultural beliefs, and skills that guided them as youngsters, as adults, and now, as leaders. These early influences served as the catalysts for their development of approaches, strategies, and skills that have helped them overcome adversity and contributed to their success as individuals. These strengths that Latino college presidents developed through their families helped them achieve a multitude of outcomes. Some of these outcomes include overcoming obstacles, meeting goals to effect change in their communities, and advancing professionally. Below is an illustration of this framework for understanding how families were central to the development of cultural strengths of Latino college presidents and in this way accentuates how families facilitated study participants' success (see Figure 2).

Although the community-cultural-wealth framework incorporates the value of family in one form of capital, familial capital, the findings from this study highlighted the crucial role of family in the development of all forms of capital and magnified family as a source of community cultural wealth. As presidents described their experiences and talked about their influences, the role of family was so central to the actual development of their skills and other assets, that in many ways, family reflects the roots of a tree. Much like roots, families gave rise to and nourished Latino college presidents in ways they cherished. Presidents recognized the critical role of their family as a source of inspiration in choosing higher education as a career or in their quest for equity, for example. Through their familial experiences some presidents recalled specific instances in which they learned the values of sacrifice, honesty, and hard work. In all these ways,

much like the roots of a tree, families shaped and supported the growth of their future college president and provided them with the nutrients or tools to shape their environment, as well as to weather the storms that they would encounter.

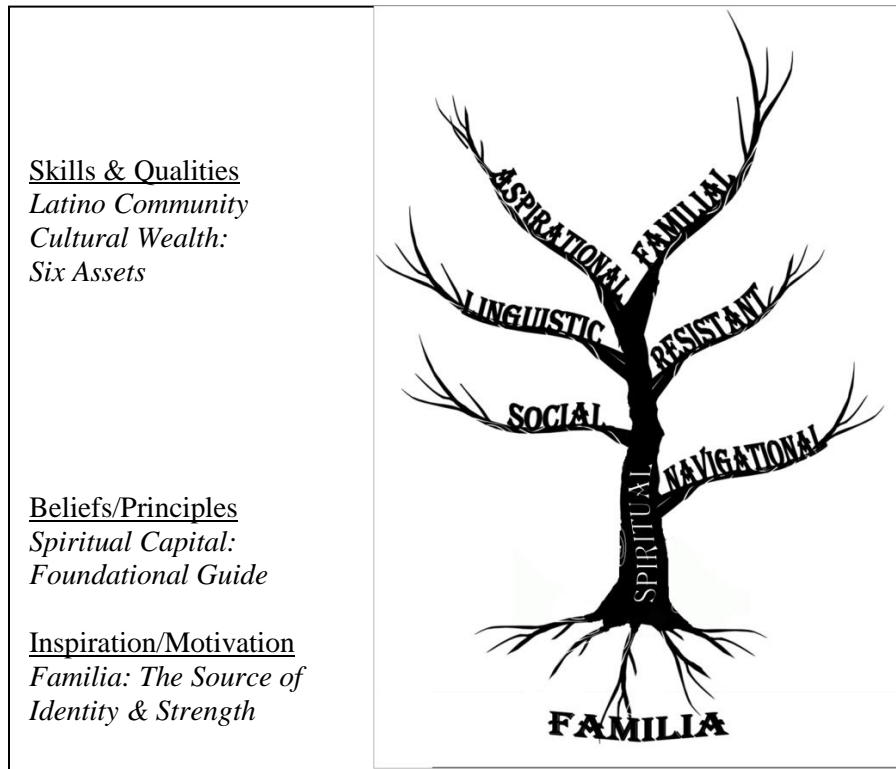


Figure 2. Latino roots of strength framework.

As a result of the richness of the cultural experiences and lessons of their source families and communities, Latino college presidents developed a multitude of skills or branches that would help them reach out to others providing support, advocacy, or connection. These branches or forms of capital encompassed the strengths study participants learned from their families and, in turn, the ways study participants existed in the world. Through their assets or branches, Latino college presidents were able to express their values, protect others, advocate for their principles such as access and

equity, and connect with a multitude of others. Consequently, as an extension of their families, study participants used their strengths to honor their families and cultural background in ways that exemplified their groundedness, power, and pride for and connection to their familial and cultural roots. Although the branches reflected Latino college presidents' cultural roots, another quality strengthened the connection between their cultural roots and their families: their sense of spirituality.

In fact, as a result of the findings from this study, I propose a revision of Yosso's community-cultural-wealth framework, as well as a model of factors that contribute to Latino college presidents' professional success that incorporates community cultural wealth. Although all forms of capital included in the community-cultural-wealth framework were represented among the approaches and strengths of all presidents in this study, spiritual capital, broadly defined, was also identified as a key form of capital present in the perspectives and lived experiences of Latino college presidents in this study. As noted previously, Huber (2009a) also suggested the addition of spiritual capital in the community-cultural-wealth framework as a result of a study of Latina students. Correspondingly, as described below, the findings from this study highlighted not only the presence of spiritual capital in the lives of Latino college presidents, but it also highlighted the undergirding strength that spiritual capital represented to study participants.

Although roots and branches comprise critical components of a tree, that tree is only as strong as its base or trunk. For Latino college presidents, their cultural assets and values had a common thread guiding and providing stability and strength to their

approaches and perspectives: spirituality. The elements of spirituality that Latino college presidents possessed arose as presidents talked about their perspectives of their roles and their goals in the field of higher education, as well as their values. Although some of their values appeared to have religious underpinnings, others were linked to the concept and definitions of spirituality (Campesino & Schwartz, 2006; Leak et al., 2007; Reave, 2005). These spiritual elements took on a variety of forms. Specifically, for example, the debt they felt they owed to their families or communities translated into their compassion for others or their values of educational equity or access. Very much like the trunk of a tree, spirituality provided a basis for its branches or forms of capital, which guided their development individually and as part of the whole tree or person. Moreover, as study participants reflected on their accomplishments, it was evident that their goals remained steadfast because they believed in concepts and values that related to a higher power or a greater purpose beyond themselves. Although *familia* had provided them with the tools they needed to impact and manage challenging environments, it was their sense of spirituality and a belief in a power and purpose outside of themselves that served as a compass and grounding force.

Illustrated in Figure 2 is the Latino roots-of-strength framework, which comprises the factors of community cultural wealth, spiritual capital, and *familia* that contributed to Latino college success and depicts how these factors intersect with each other. In this model, the roots represent the families of Latino college presidents participating in this study, reflecting the role of *familia* as a source of identity and strength for Latinos, providing them with cultural assets or capital, values, and approaches. These strengths or

forms of capital of study participants are represented by the branches of the tree. Like branches, these assets extend beyond the individual and impact their environment. Correspondingly, branches also serve to protect and shield. Lastly, the base or trunk of the tree symbolizes the breadth and groundedness of their values in spirituality. Through this foundational lens of spirituality, Latino college presidents in this study described a direction that guided their lives and careers and contributed to their connection to their cultural values.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Latino leaders are influenced by their environment and cultural background. These influences led them to develop beliefs, approaches, and strategies about life and work that act as assets or strengths to them in the work environment. As a result of having these qualities and skills, Latino college leaders add a different perspective to their environments, are able to maneuver through obstacles, and achieve success. The result of these findings is a model that recognizes how the cultural strengths of people of color are defining factors rather than factors defined by external or difficult circumstances.

Latino college presidents used a myriad of qualities and perspectives to help them achieve successful outcomes. Most of these qualities have been identified as part of the community-cultural-wealth framework as aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, resistant, and navigational capital. In this study, Latinos also shared that religion, faith, and spirituality were guiding forces in their lives, which, combined with community cultural wealth, formulate a more comprehensive view of the resources they drew from to succeed. Using all of these forms of cultural capital, Latino college presidents were able

to establish identities, approaches, and goals derived from their early experiences with their families and communities.

Although families were the source of study participants' development of cultural wealth, cultural values themselves were central to the strategies and approaches that contributed to Latino college presidents' success. Through their perspectives on circumstances, their skills, or their communities, all the presidents cited instances when their cultural background, experiences, or values helped them in their professional lives. The majority of Latino college presidents shared stories about the ways their families and communities influenced and shaped who they are. They also communicated a profound gratitude for the support they had received that permeated their goals to impact their communities. In sum, the role that cultural background played in Latino college presidents' lives was central to their work lives and subsequent success.

Given that study participants communicated about the cultural values that were central to their professional lives, I sought to understand how cultural background shaped the Latino college presidents in my study. As a result of the findings, I realized that the six distinct forms of capital in the community-cultural-wealth framework were present in the lived experiences of the research participants. Like Huber (2010), I also found that there was a spiritual component to their experiences. However, these individual factors, in and of themselves, did not fully explain the value of a Latino college president. Instead, it is the combination, merging, and interaction of these forms of capital that more comprehensively illustrates the potential depth of impact of Latino's upbringing on their lives and their livelihoods. In the following section, I describe these connections between

forms of capital, integrated into the themes that emerged during my conversations with Latino college presidents.

The Pivotal Role of Family to Career Success

Citing experiences with their parents, community or *familia*, and teachers, Latino college presidents developed a sense of self and a set of values that guided them. Not only did they have a hopeful outlook for changing current achievement or access gaps, but they were also able to communicate with a wide variety of audiences in ways that expanded their scope of impact and facilitated their ability to create environments conducive to reaching their goals. Moreover, the loyalty, sacrifice, and care their parents exhibited toward them armed these Latino college presidents with a sense of security and assuredness that kept them grounded in their work. Finally, with much gratitude and a commitment to goals outside of themselves, most research participants noted the importance of role models and mentors in helping them move forward.

Si Se Puede: Focus and Determination Beyond Barriers

The sense of security and support that Latinos in this study gained from their families contributed to their ability to put challenges in perspective and not get overwhelmed by obstacles, and in this way, use their aspirational capital. As a source of motivation, Latino college presidents recalled their parents' accomplishments, despite not having the formal training or education that would be expected or needed to complete them. Latino college presidents' stories about their experiences and hopes for the future demonstrated the impact their parents had in shaping both. The role modeling and encouragement, or insistence from their parents that they pursue education, provided

powerful influences in how presidents perceived challenges, as they sought better prospects for themselves and their communities.

In this study, Latino college presidents disclosed seemingly impossible goals they had established for themselves. They spoke positively and passionately about improving access to higher education for underrepresented students, broadening the definition of diversity on their campus communities, reducing the achievement gap, or improving graduation rates for populations that historically had dismal college attendance and completion rates. Despite posing substantial challenges for the field of higher education, Latino college presidents in this study still committed much time and efforts to addressing these issues on their campuses as well as in local, statewide, and national arenas.

Study participants not only contended with higher education issues, but also with resistance aimed at them as individuals and as leaders. They endured critics and took antagonists in stride. For example, when encountering bias or questions about their abilities, presidents in this study chose to view those difficulties as a common barrier that others faced and that they had to withstand in their careers. Moreover, they set those experiences aside and, instead, chose to focus their time and energies on accomplishing their goals. Although the pain of discrimination or lack of support was real for them, Latino presidents chose to keep their focus on improving conditions for, their staff, faculty, and students, and themselves. With this attitude and response to misperceptions about their skills or talents, Latino college presidents in this study often exceeded their own expectations and the expectations of naysayers. In many ways, their aspirational

capital helped them develop the resilience to work through difficulties and emerge as formidable leaders on their campuses.

Communication: The Latino Bridge

Although Latino college presidents' ability to aspire to better things despite obstacles marked their resilience, Latino college presidents' communication skills were keys to their ability to successfully build alliances. Whether research participants were interviewing for jobs, trying to galvanize support, or talking with the maintenance staff at their campuses, they relied on different communication skills, or their linguistic capital, to reach their goals. With skills such as storytelling, Spanish-speaking abilities, and sensitivity to varying communication styles, Latino college presidents connected with a wide range of stakeholders. Their ability to communicate across different populations or stakeholders increased their ability to deliver their message, to create a sense of community, and to be effective leaders. Specifically, their ability to communicate the story of their campuses to donors and trustees yielded financial resources for their institutions and institutional support for their vision. In sum, their value for creating a unified sense of community drove the purpose of their communication to build friendships and alliances as they were working toward achieving their goals.

Some presidents enjoyed the ways telling stories connected their upbringing with their current goals of helping parents and students feel more comfortable in a campus setting or sharing their experiences to create a sense of community and purpose among their colleagues. Overall, the presidents in this study talked about their comfort in reaching out to students, parents, and others in their community to make them feel part of

the campus. With an increasingly diverse student population, particularly Latino students, a president's ability to reach out to these campus community members can be seen as critical to their effectiveness as campus leaders. Unmistakably, their effective communication with others has impacted communities in which Latino college presidents work and the relationships they are able to foster. In sum, with these skills, Latino college presidents adeptly worked with others to meet their goals and galvanize much needed cooperation not only to build relationships and create welcoming, inclusive environments, but also to garner support for themselves as they climbed the higher education ladder.

Community Minded, Career Focused

A quien a buen árbol se arrima, buena sombra le cobija

Whomever leans close to a good tree is blanketed by good shade

~Latino Proverb

As Latino college presidents in this study contemplated the contributors to their success, all credited their families, communities, or mentors as instrumental to their achievements. In their eyes, their social capital was crucial to establishing and reaching their goals. These relationships and study participants' ability to recognize and maximize the value of these relationships comprise their social capital. Specifically, Latino college presidents in this study not only enjoyed connecting to others, but were also open to the advice of others in ways that facilitated their professional development. Parents, teachers, supervisors, and other academic leaders in their lives were key supporters or trainers of these would-be presidents and members of their network. Study participants appreciated

the assistance and guidance others provided, not taking opportunities for granted, but instead putting forth their best effort in each role or project they were afforded.

Moreover, they often saw their professional advocates and sponsors as *familia* and, as such, cherished and fostered those relationships. In conclusion, study participants' social capital included not only their networks, but also the ways they viewed or used these associations to build a community of support while effecting change in and outside of their campuses.

Finding the Way Through Higher Education With a Different Map

As Latino college presidents in this study talked about their career paths, they revealed the ways they learned about the culture and unspoken rules of higher education to succeed. Using their navigational capital, Latino college presidents creatively and innovatively approached their work responsibilities and accomplished their goals. For example, as they surveyed the needs of their community, they sought new ideas and different ways that their institutions could meet those needs. Because institutional decision making or processes might take a long time to establish partnerships with communities, study participants sometimes sought alternative collaborations that could push their institutions further and faster in meeting institutional or community needs. As a result of their ability to work through the higher education bureaucracy, they established strategies that were able to address existing community needs in a timely manner.

Specifically, when one study participant, early in his career, realized that the local Latino community wanted and needed a gifted-students program, he connected his

institution's graduate social work and education internship programs with the local high school to create such a program. Another Latino college president described, as an early career administrator, that newly elected Latino legislators in his state were unaware of the university budgetary process; he felt inspired to develop workshops on the university-budget process for those legislators to hold institutions accountable to the needs of the community. Yet another president in her executive-leadership role saw the academic potential of students who might be missed in traditional admissions processes; she contacted a high school and resources to develop a dual-enrollment program. Her dual-enrollment program was able to prepare students to become college ready so they could succeed, once they arrived on campus as college students. It was with this ingenuity and resolve to maneuver through unfamiliar processes or dynamics in higher education that study participants identified and used existing resources to meet current institutional and community needs. Ultimately, these skills led to successful outcomes and were recognized by study participants' superiors and by others in higher education, providing a sense of credibility and advancement opportunities.

Latino presidents' ability to navigate their environments successfully could also speak to the intersectionality of their strengths, a quality that is noted in the LatCrit framework. Further, Latinos' multi-dimensional identities make it possible for them to exist and co-exist within diverse environments and in this way maneuver the challenges that they may face (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). As noted in their survey responses, most of the study participants viewed their race as White, possibly reflecting their bi-cultural abilities or knowledge as they encountered majority-cultured institutions. Through their

perspectives and view of themselves as both White and Latino, study participants adopted both parts of their identities in ways that helped them succeed as they also supported others' success.

Using Resistant Capital *en la lucha* to Effect Change

A critical source of Latino college presidents' sense of justice and commitment to challenging the status quo, or their resistant capital, was their parents. Parents of Latino college presidents made sacrifices. They left their home countries to seek better opportunities for their children. Parents sometimes did without so their children could have more. At times, as language and ethnic minorities in this country, study participants' parents were taken advantage of by employers or excluded from educational or advancement opportunities. In some cases, study participants' siblings did not have the opportunity to pursue higher education. As a result of these difficulties encountered by their loved ones, presidents in this study became motivated to become activists. In response to injustices or challenges they witnessed their parents or community enduring, Latino college presidents participating in this study committed themselves to social justice and equity issues at their institutions, and in this way, used their resistant capital. Latino college presidents saw access to education and the achievement gap as social-justice issues that they should and could impact. They dedicated themselves to effecting change so that more members of their community could take advantage of and succeed in college. It was with this sense of looking out for others and supporting others that Latino college presidents were clear about their role as higher education leaders and that motivated them to transform campus environments.

Latino college presidents in this study sometimes guided and at other times pushed their institutions to become more inclusive, to address critical educational issues, or to remain true to a mission of being the “great equalizers,” affording everyone the opportunity to succeed and advance themselves through their own effort. Study participants saw themselves as having a responsibility to take risks to improve their institutions by increasing access to educational opportunities and resources and to better their campuses by fostering environments where dialogue about issues affecting diverse campus populations could happen. In some ways, resistant capital provided a sense of liberation for Latino college presidents to counter or break from oppressive realities, reflecting its link with elements of spiritual capital (Comas-Diaz, 2012). Through their actions, focus on community and collective liberation, study participants exemplified the ways in which their values and approaches intersected. Finally, it was with their focus on changing the status quo that presidents sought to create educational communities where individuals from various backgrounds could become successful students, professors, staff, or administrators on their campuses.

With their commitment to create institutions where people of all backgrounds can grow, learn, and succeed, Latino college presidents challenged individuals and communities to see things differently. Each president had a vision for what their institution could be and they used their roles, their networks, their skills, and their values more closely realize that vision. Ironically, although institutions and communities have resisted their leadership or ideas, Latino college presidents in this study forged ahead,

helping their institutions to improve as they prepared for the demographic changes and challenges they face and will continue to face as campus diversity increases.

Familia: An Anchor for Connection and Responsibility

Although in the section above I noted the powerful role of *familia* to the development of multiple forms of capital, in this section I want to distinguish family as a source of capital from family as a source of support and as an approach to others. A sense of community and family is central to many Latinos, and was no different for the Latinos who were a part of this study. All the presidents noted the presence and influence of their nuclear families in helping them establish their values, their identities, their self-confidence, and in some ways, their leadership skills. For example, presidents talked about the unconditional support and loyalty they received from their families as central to having an “anchor” that helped them feel confident and firm in making decisions. With the consistent presence of family support, study participants did not believe they sought the approval of others in their decision making, but instead based decisions on their values and the needs of their institutions. Armed with this perspective and experience of family as a stable and supportive force, Latino college presidents in this study approached and developed their campus communities.

As a part of their experiences growing up, study participants viewed other community members as extended family members or *familia*. Friends, mentors, and other community members were a part of their close network of caring and support. During their interviews, Latino college presidents reflected on the support they received from others throughout their careers. From teachers in elementary and high school, to faculty

members, to supervisors and presidents of their institutions, study participants listed the cadre of individuals who they credited with their success. In turn, Latino college presidents saw themselves as resources and supporters of their communities, or *familia*, that included their college campuses. Sometimes study participants referred to their colleagues and students as family; at other times, their care and concern for their campus community reflected the ways they cared about their *familia*. This approach toward others established strong relationships and provided instrumental support to their leadership and decision making.

Further, Latino presidents worked to communicate their value for family. Not only did they treat their relationships with students, staff, faculty, and administrators with the consideration and care of family, but they were also inclusive of families on their campuses. A number of presidents prided themselves on welcoming students' families to campus, providing them with resources and information to help their students succeed, at the same time acknowledging the key role of families to students. One president even dedicated institutional dollars to create a family-outreach position at her institution to ensure that the support to and from families were optimized at her institution. In conclusion, although Latino college presidents in this study identified a deep value for family, for them, this value extended to their behaviors and attitudes toward their campus communities and to their approach to leading a higher education institution.

For all Latino college presidents in this study, family stories, experiences, and lessons helped shape who they were as individuals and as campus leaders. The power of the connections, sacrifices, and loyalty of their families was reflected in many study

participants wanting to foster some of those dynamics in their work with campus and surrounding communities. They cared about their campus community much as if it was their family and they used this approach to build relationships and more welcoming and responsive institutions.

Spirituality as a Compass for Latino College Presidents

In a study of undocumented students, Huber (2010) found that spirituality was a form of capital that the women used in their undergraduate careers to transcend the barriers they faced. Huber noted that spirituality for research participants was about connection to self and others as well as “a connection to a reality that does not yet exist” (p. 184). For these undocumented students, spirituality and faith provided them with hope, motivation, and strength. Huber suggested that spiritual capital be added to the community-cultural-wealth framework. Consistent with Huber’s findings, the concepts of spirituality and faith also emerged as a form of capital for Latino college presidents in my study. Latino college presidents shared elements of spirituality, their religious beliefs, and faith during the interviews. Through these beliefs and perspectives, Latino college presidents derived meaning, direction, and strength in their personal and professional lives.

Before exploring the findings encompassing spiritual capital, I first review the qualities and perspectives that I include as part of this form of capital. Similar to Huber (2010), I noted that some Latino college presidents talked specifically about religion or religious concepts. These comments reflected elements of spiritual capital that connect to a specific religion or religious experiences and that I include in my discussion below. As

noted in Chapter 4, the concept of spirituality also emerged in comments, views, and experiences of Latino college presidents. For Latinos, there are religious underpinnings in their cultural connections, approaches, beliefs, and sense of well-being rooted in what they may have experienced with their Latino parents or communities (Comas-Diaz, 2006). Specifically, spiritual individuals find meaning in occurrences beyond themselves and feel a greater sense of purpose in their lives and work (Leak et al., 2007). In their study of Latina spirituality, Campesino and Schwartz (2006) identified spirituality as a key resource for Latina's, their families, and communities. Accordingly, Latinas' feeling an obligation to others or a collective sense of responsibility was linked to their relationships with cultural and religious symbolic beings. In a meta-analysis of 150 studies examining spirituality, Reave (2005) noted the effect of spiritual ideals such as integrity and honesty on leadership success. Reave (2005) concluded that spiritual teachings crucial to leadership success included showing respect for others, demonstrating fair treatment, expressing care and concern or compassion, and recognizing others' contributions. In this study, as Latino college presidents shared their experiences and values, elements of their faith and spirituality emerged as central to their view of themselves and their career and life direction, which included their work in the field of higher education.

Although only five presidents spoke specifically about religion and faith, all presidents exhibited the qualities of spirituality defined above. This perspective guided presidents as they interacted with others in honest, consistent, and fair ways. The desire for presidents in this study to improve environments or create opportunities for others to

succeed demonstrated their compassion, another element of spirituality. Finally, Latino college presidents talked about having a greater goal or purpose to impact their institutions, and their student and staff communities. With each of these elements as part of their approach, Latino college presidents fostered caring and respectful institutions that respond to and take responsibility for the needs of communities.

With values of honesty and integrity they learned through their parents and families, Latino college presidents developed trust and credibility. As Raul noted, these “indisputable ethics” contributed to decisions focused on the good of others and right and wrong. As a result of holding true to these values, presidents in this study are viewed as genuine and concerned for their staff members’ and their institutions’ well-being. One president even noted his faculty changing their by-laws so that he could be a part of the faculty senate because they trusted that he had their and their institution’s best interests at heart. As a result of their commitment to leading with integrity, Latino college presidents were not only seen as more effective and trustworthy, but were also able to engender the trust in their communities that expanded their scope of influence.

Most presidents prided themselves on the level of respect with which they approached others, regardless of their status or level. Presidents valued their ability to connect to others and their ability to help others feel like an important part of their campus community. They viewed this approach as respectful and fair and as essential for any campus leader. Moreover, presidents in this study showed a level of respect for their campuses by advocating for fair and equal treatment for their communities. As they addressed issues of diversity or academic preparation, Latino college presidents wanted

all members of their communities to be heard, respected, and supported. Eduardo, like other presidents, described that he was able to learn from staff members by asking them to share with him all they knew about their jobs. In this way, staff members felt appreciated and valued. He also recalled his work to meet and communicate with legislative aides, as a first step in his work with legislators, rendering his work with those legislators much more successful. The lessons Eduardo learned from this approach were invaluable in creating a sense of community and pride among the individuals with whom he works, as well as helping him reach his and his institution's goals.

For many Latino college presidents, the care and concern they exhibit in their work is driven by their compassion for others. Study participants wanted others to have the same opportunities they had. They fought for more access to education and to level the academic playing field, at times forcefully advocating for their institutions and colleagues to establish stronger support for underrepresented students, thereby reaching back to others as they were moving forward in their careers. This compassion inspired their career decisions as well as the desire to mentor others so they could be supported to advance.

Latino college presidents' compassion was manifested in their passionate commitment to social justice and equity. They had visions and had begun implementing efforts to reach a reality for their students and institutions that did not yet exist. They saw better access to education and the elimination of the achievement gap, as their institutions reflect the increasing Latino high school-graduate population. In sum, with this sense of a greater goal and purpose through their spiritual capital, Latino college presidents in this

study worked to make everyone on their campus feel heard; they committed themselves to a vision of a better reality for their communities, they saw their students and staff as invaluable resources, and they pushed their institutions to grow with their changing demographics.

Implications of this Study

The findings from this study highlight the value Latinos have for *familia* as well as the impact families have on Latino administrators' development of skills and approaches for success. This study adds to the current literature in that it provides support to the community-cultural-wealth-framework assertion that people of color, and in this case, Latino college presidents at four year institutions, possess cultural strengths and assets that they bring to the higher education arena. Latino families and their cultural traditions are not only valuable additions to college communities, but also essential to study participants' bringing culturally relevant approaches to increasingly diverse campuses. This study explored how Latino college presidents translated their cultural learning and cultural values into skills and approaches that positively impacted their institutions and facilitated their career success.

Implications for Practice

Organizations seeking to support Latino administrators in higher education should not only focus their efforts on acknowledging and addressing these cultural value-added strengths, but might also make strides in providing the higher education community with more exposure to and awareness of cultural strengths and approaches. Accordingly, cultural-background and cultural-strength information should be viewed as integral

components of culturally competent organizational or professional-development efforts. Moreover, these resources should include diverse perspectives in planning and implementation phases. However, the efficacy of well-planned efforts can only be realized when institutional communities are ready to value and support diverse perspectives and leaders. Therefore, leadership programs should work in concert with the higher education community to elevate the importance of cultural strengths as keys to institutional diversity and success.

Higher education institutions can use the findings from this study to shape campus environments and procedures that acknowledge and foster the use of cultural skills and values. Campus leaders can create and foster campuses and programs that understand the strengths and influences of diverse communities. Additionally, procedures and policies can incorporate, state, or reflect a campus community's valuing of nontraditional forms of capital and can demonstrate to diverse students, staff, and faculty that their experience and perspectives matter. Consequently, incorporating culturally sensitive approaches may result in better outcomes in recruiting, supporting, and retaining diverse faculty, staff, and students on campus.

Because search committees often serve as gatekeepers, particularly because of their biases or misperceptions about diverse candidates, the findings from this study suggest that colleges could benefit from investing in cultural training for search-committee members. As institutions seek to diversify their administrator and faculty ranks, they might use these findings to train search committees to identify key cultural skills and qualities that contribute to the academic environment. Information and

knowledge that highlights the nontraditional cultural capital of Latinos and other people of color might help mitigate decision making based on stereotypes or misunderstanding.

As the field of higher education continues to grapple with recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and administrators, the findings from this study suggest that academics look to the efforts they are implementing with students. Targeted outreach, mentoring, and cultural programming are equally important for staff, including faculty and administrators, as they are for underrepresented students. Fostering a sense of community and incorporating families could be key strategies that attract and retain more diversity on campuses.

Furthermore, in this study, the value of *familia* was not understated. Instead, study participants spoke highly of their parents, families, and communities as being central to their career aspirations and professional achievements. The higher education arena should explore how to translate the role of *familia* and associated values of *familia* into organizational culture, values, structures, and processes to maximize their reach to and integration of the Latino community and their cultural assets. For example, creating cohorts for new faculty or staff members could help foster a sense of community and support when they first arrive on campus. Additionally, campus leaders could facilitate campuswide trainings or meetings in ways that reflect a range of learning and communication styles. Finally, the value of connection to a cause or community could be highlighted in advancement processes such as promotion and tenure.

Finally, the findings from this study highlighted Latino college presidents' skills and qualities, gained from their backgrounds, that supported their professional success

and align with the goals and needs of institutions to support the changing and diversifying student population. Therefore, it serves institutions, the field of higher education, and the nation to consider ways they can foster and reinforce these cultural values across campuses. To better support Latina/o college presidents, the higher education community and its supporters could benefit from understanding these influences and identifying the ways that these strengths could continue to improve more campus environments and higher education outcomes. From their commitment to social justice to their ability to connect to and understand diverse communities, to their aptitude for managing challenges, Latino college presidents are successfully leading their campuses with a different approach and a unique set of skills. The higher education community needs to shift from a deficit-based perspective on Latino leaders to an assets-based perspective, and begin to acknowledge and more broadly incorporate these powerful and successful individuals and diverse cultural values into their communities.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional strengths-based research on Latino college presidents is needed to examine variables such as gender, socioeconomic background, religion or spirituality, being bilingual or bicultural, and national origin and how these factors may intersect with or add forms of capital to the community cultural wealth framework. For example, how do Latinas and Latinos differ in their use or maintenance of cultural strengths? How does national origin or socioeconomic background impact the development of cultural strengths for Latino men and women? How does spirituality define or shape the strengths of Latinos? How does being bilingual or bicultural create strengths that facilitate

connections or bridges to other communities or experiences? An examination of the linkages or impact of other variables or background factors to cultural wealth could continue to illuminate the ways leaders with diverse backgrounds could be supported.

A second area for further study is an examination of current professional-development opportunities for aspiring Latina/o college presidents. How are cultural values incorporated in training and development activities? In what ways are the cultural values of participants reinforced or connected to professional skills or roles? What impact does the inclusion of or focus on cultural values have on subsequent participant success or connection to culture? Although inclusion of cultural variables in professional development for aspiring leaders may be new, it could be helpful to identify efforts or communities that have addressed or acknowledged culture as a critical leadership asset to identify potential applications to the higher education arena.

Another potential area for further research is exploring the intersection of community cultural wealth with campus climate. What is the campus climate of institutions with diverse leaders who use culturally based or culturally influenced leadership approaches? How does or can campus climate foster cultural strengths? What institutional components or elements support diverse cultural expression or diverse leadership? How is the use or expression of cultural strengths impacted by type of institution, such as a PWI or an HSI?

Conclusion and Reflections

Shortly before graduating from high school, I was talking to a guidance counselor; she told me, “You’re not like the rest [of the Latino students in this high school].” She was talking about the fact that I was at the top of my high school class and attending an Ivy League college in the fall. I nodded in agreement, believing that there was something “right” about me and something “wrong” with my peers, my family, and my culture. Consequently, when I got to college, I distanced myself from my family and my cultural background, believing that this was the only way I could succeed. As a result of devaluing my history, my background and my family, I soon began to feel a sense of loss of who I was. In many ways I did not feel anchored or sure of myself as I had in high school.

Ironically, after coming to terms with the value of my culture and especially the value and courage of my family, I found myself, 15 years later, as an administrator in higher education with a similar feeling of loss and confidence, because in some ways, I had still “checked my culture at the door.” Through the support of my colleagues of color, including faculty of color in my doctoral program, my sheer determination to challenge and address the exclusivity of the status quo in the culture of higher education, my commitment not only to my family, but also to my familia, and my unwavering belief that things could change despite the obstacles that continue to present themselves and almost multiply on a daily basis, I am still here. Not only am I still here, but I have learned from 14 incredible Latino college leaders that our culture and our

familia are the key to our success ... and they have been the key all along. If only I had listened to what I felt and saw in my upbringing, instead of what I heard and saw outside of my family, this journey back to them might have been shorter.

As a community, higher education is at a crossroads. Although the population of this country has continued to diversify, college campus leaders have not yet figured out how to transform their institutions to be more welcoming places for all individuals. As a result, higher education continues to experience dismal numbers when it comes to the proportionate participation of populations of color as students, faculty, staff members, and as chief executive officers. Whether it is the challenges of recruiting or retaining faculty, staff, or administrators of color or helping students of color complete college and graduate degrees, higher education continues to fail. Although calls for more diverse leadership are made, due to the impending growth of diverse populations, it behooves institutions to make these decisions, too, based on their current inability to resolve these broader recruitment and retention issues. Perhaps, the higher education community needs to take a critical look at itself and its lack of success at diversifying campuses, and particularly, the leadership of campuses. Clearly, a different approach is needed. Changes might require that staff and administrators of color who are engaged in the field not only are more integrated in the planning and decision making, but that their approaches and strategies lead the charge. The Latino college presidents in this study have not only added a new perspective to addressing age-old institutional issues, but they also talked about being open to giving others the opportunity to do the same, helping to expand the diversity at their institutions in numbers and thought.

Although there is a need for more Latino college presidents and other presidents of color in higher education, some campus communities remain reluctant to fully support these leaders and integrate the diversity of thought they bring. Specifically, three of the Latino college presidents in this study are no longer in their roles. Although they resigned from their positions, and are no longer leading an institution, much controversy was linked to their leadership, and may have contributed to their decisions to depart. During their participation in this study, Latino presidents illuminated that they felt called to undertake their leadership roles in higher education and desire to effect change. Their commitment to equity, access, and compassion was pervasive and unstoppable. Unfortunately, higher education communities, trustees, and other stakeholders have either limited the leadership opportunities or the length of time that these leaders have to effect lasting change at their institutions. It is time to shift this trend, not by examining what higher education has done to exclude diverse leaders, but instead, by understanding that change is a favorable and needed outcome for our campuses. Latino leaders value and continue to work for that change. It is what we learned from our *familia* and what the higher education community, if they're ready, can learn too.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Questions for Latino College and University Presidents at Four-year Institutions

These questions may be modified depending on responses to Demographics Questionnaire. The follow up questions will be asked as needed to probe for more information.

1. Can you tell me your educational and career path to the college presidency?
2. What does “being Latina/o” mean to you?
 - a. Are there any elements of growing up Latina/o that stand out to you?
3. Could you describe the values you learned from your family that have shaped your life and work? Can you tell me some examples of how you learned these values?
 - a. How has the concept of family impacted your connection to the Latino community?
 - b. How has it impacted your career path and your success (ascension to executive leadership role)?
4. Can you tell me about the significant moments in your life that helped you in defining what you wanted to do with your life (professionally)?
 - a. Did you have a notion of where you’d end up professionally?
5. Who has been a mentor in your life? What qualities or behaviors stood out about them for you?

6. What values helped you achieve the administrator role that you currently have? Talk about a time(s) when you first realized or internalized those values.
7. When have your cultural values been an asset and when have they posed a challenge for you professionally? (Review some specific values mentioned in question 6)
8. Talk about a time when you got things done at work (college or university) that you were not expected or supported to accomplish? How did you complete the goal under these conditions?
9. What or who do you count on for information and/or support?
 - a. What role do these individuals or things have in your professional world?
10. Much of the research on the experiences of Latinos in higher education notes the challenges that Latino's and other administrators of color work through to succeed. What specific challenges have you experienced? What qualities about you and/or your background have helped you navigate challenges that you have faced on your career path?
11. How do you identify yourself racially? Do you identify yourself as bi-cultural and/or bilingual? In what ways has being bi-cultural and/or bilingual contributed to your work in higher education?
 - a. How have these qualities/skills supported your ascent to a presidency?
12. When in your life have you felt that speaking up against something has effected change? What was the situation? What happened? (If not higher

education related) How have you spoken up or advocated for something you believed in during your career?

13. What lasting impact would you like to have left at your institution or within the field of higher education?

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Research Project Demographics Questionnaire

Demographics Questionnaire

Gloria Lopez is conducting a research study called “Palante! Toward the Presidency: Factors that Facilitate Latino Leadership in Higher Education.” Ms. Lopez is interested in the extent to which cultural background impact Latino college presidents’ careers and ascent to presidential positions.

As a first step in participating in this study, please fill out this demographics questionnaire and e-mail completed questionnaire to Ms. Lopez at glopez30@hotmail.com. The information in this questionnaire will be kept confidential and will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation study. Ms. Lopez will contact you within 2 weeks to schedule an interview at a location and time that is convenient for you.

Name _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?

- No, I’m not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.
- Yes, I am Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a.
- Yes, I am Puerto Rican.
- Yes, I am Cuban.
- Yes, I am of another Hispanic, Latino, Spanish origin. (Please Specify) _____

How do you identify yourself racially/ethnically? (Check all that apply)

- White
- African/African American
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Other(please specify) _____

In what country were you born? _____
If born outside of the U.S., how long have you been in the U.S.? _____

If you were born in the U.S., what is your generational status as a Latina/o in the U.S.?

- ____ First Generation (parents born outside U.S., you were born in U.S.)
- ____ Second Generation (parents born in U.S., you were born in U.S.)
- ____ Third Generation (parents and grandparents born in U.S., you were born in U.S.)

As a child, did you attend public or private schools? Public Private

Where did you attend school from K–12? In the U.S.
 In Other location (please specify) _____
 In the U.S. and Other Location (please specify) _____

Where did you attend college? In the U.S.
 In other location (please specify) _____
 In the U.S. and Other Location (please specify) _____

Were you a first generation college student? Yes No

Was your undergraduate college education supported by financial aid, scholarships, grants, etc? Yes No

How long have you been working in higher education? _____

What was your first role in higher education and at what institution? _____

What was your position prior to achieving a presidency and at what institution did you hold that role? _____

For more information contact Gloria Lopez at 617-908-8918 or glopez30@hotmail.com.

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