THE JOURNEYS OF FIVE LATINO/A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to acquire knowledge about the journeys of five Latino/a community college presidents from Texas and the Midwest region. This research study was conducted because there is minimal scholarly work on Latino/a leaders in community colleges. This is a critical topic today because community colleges currently serve over 50% of the U.S. Latino student population, and yet there is a disproportion between Latino/a students attending community colleges and Latino/a community college presidents.

It is well noted that over the past two decades the U.S. has experienced a significant demographic change. Over the past 10 years, Latinos have become the largest minority group in the country; however, they continue to be significantly underrepresented at all levels of higher education. Therefore, the purpose of the in-depth interviews was to encourage and motivate other Latino/as to dream of becoming community college presidents someday. Story-telling plays a significant role in the Latino culture.

This research study provides rich dialog about the five Latino/a presidents' family history, challenges, and leadership attributes. The research study also offers insight regarding the current leadership gap between Latinos and non-Latinos. In summary, the findings indicate that there are several similarities among the participants, regardless of whether they live in Texas or in the Midwest region. However, it is important to note that each participant had a distinct pathway to the presidency. Finally, there were five

themes that emerged from this research study: family, mentors, perception that kindness

is a weakness, overcoming adversity, and leadership attributes.

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CHAPTER 1

FOCUS OF STUDY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The researcher will begin by acknowledging that the term *Latino* will be used throughout the study. The author understands and acknowledges that using the term *Latino* can be problematic and controversial because of the number of terms that exist to describe a person of Spanish decent. The term *Latino* is not preferred by all members of the "group" that it is intended to represent. However, the researcher will use the term *Latino* when referring to people of Spanish-speaking countries and heritage.

We begin with a quote from Weisman and Vaughan (2002), who stated, "Community college leaders take pride in their commitment to American democracy and the idea of serving their communities." A few years prior to their comment, Vaughan (1989) stated, "We must never forget that all Americans have the right to pursue the American Dream; we must never forget that the community college represents the only hope millions of Americans have of achieving that dream" (p. 87). Gutierrez et al. (2002) claimed that a statement such as Vaughan's is especially true for Latinos because they attend community colleges at a greater rate than any other ethnic and racial group. The researcher believes that community colleges across the country should demonstrate that they are committed to recruiting, cultivating, and supporting minority leaders, especially Latino/a leaders who are interested in becoming future community college presidents.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) recently published an article titled "Community College Leadership in the New Millennium" (Hockaday & Puyear, 2013). Hockaday and Puyear suggested that, in the future, the most significant traits of an effective community college leader are *vision, integrity, confidence, courage, technical knowledge, collaboration, persistence, good judgment,* and *a desire to lead*. Hockaday and Puyear further stated that studies, both empirical and formal, indicate that retirement and turnover among America's community college leadership in the near future will have a serious impact, because as many as 600 of the slightly more than 1,200 community college presidents in the United States could retire during the next decade (p. 3). In 2002, Gutierrez et al. predicted such a turnover by stating that "the current retirement tsunami would be due to aging baby boomers. This is the reason the community college sector has mounted numerous national, regional, and institutional professional development programs to prepare the next generation of leaders" (p. 42). Therefore, leadership is a major focus of many organizations, including the AACC.

In regard to Hockaday and Puyear's (2013) "most significant traits of the next millennium" (p. 2), this researcher has a significant concern: there is an assumption that diversity has already been embedded into these traits. The researcher suggests that significant work must be done in terms of being more direct with future leaders about the issues and challenges they will face when dealing with diversity sensitivity, cultural awareness, and training. We cannot continue to assume that every leader will automatically apply diversity sensitivity to his or her work. In essence, organizations have to do more than just talk about diversity. It has to be embedded into the fabric of every organization.

Leadership diversity and diversity sensitivity are important issues. Martinez and Fernandez (2004) reminded us that minority students represent 21% of all students enrolled in higher education, yet those minority students constitute over 60% of the total enrollment in community colleges (p. 51), largely because community colleges often represent a stepping-stone to a bachelor's degree. Because the demographic landscape is changing in community colleges, understanding diversity is rapidly becoming a necessity at all levels, but especially at the leadership level. Therefore, it is important that our future leaders receive specialized training in order to be better prepared for a diverse student population. Friedel (2010) echoed this idea:

> The need for a new generation of community college leaders converges with a number of factors affecting the design and substance of doctoral leadership programs, including the major trends having an impact on community colleges such as the stresses of an increasing student population with greater diversity and higher accountability. (p. 52)

This research study is being conducted because the literature indicates there is a significant gap between the percentage of Latino/a students attending community colleges and the percentage of Latino/a community college presidents. According to Gutierrez et al. (2002), approximately 56% of the 1.2 million Latinos in American higher education attend community colleges; however, Latino presidents at community colleges comprise between 3 to 4% of the total (p. 298). The question that continually arises is, "Is there a Latino leadership crisis at community colleges?" The researcher believes that there is indeed a crisis and therefore more research needs to be conducted in order to find answers to address the gap between the number of Latino students attending community colleges and the number of Latinos serving as college presidents.

To support the idea that a Latino leadership crisis does indeed exist at community colleges, Table 1 provides a brief profile on community college student enrollment by race/ethnicity. Table 2 presents a description/breakdown of current community college presidents and their racial/ethnic background, and Table 3 offers data on community college presidents based on gender. The three tables then will be compared and analyzed to give the reader an idea of the disparity between the Latino/a student body representation and Latino/as at the presidential level at community colleges across the country. These data are important because they give the reader a basis for the topic of concern in this dissertation.

Table 1

Community College Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
White/Caucasian	59
Latino	18
African American	15
Asian/Pacific Islander	6
Native American	1
Other/Unknown	9

(American Association of Community Colleges, 2013)

Table 2

Community College Presidents by Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
White/Caucasian	81
Latino	6
African American	8
Asian/Pacific Islander	1
Native American	1
Other	3

(American Association of Community Colleges, 2013)

Table 3

Community College Presidents by Gender

Gender	Percentage
Male	72
Female	28

(American Association of Community Colleges, 2013)

As shown in Table 1, Latino/as are the second largest student population being served by community colleges, according to the AACC (2013), and yet they are significantly underrepresented in senior leadership. Clearly there exists a disproportion when comparing the student enrollment for minority students and the percentage of Anglo/White presidents.

One of the major concerns is that in the next 10 years, community colleges will see a significant increase of Latino students attending community college. Various sources, such as the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), indicate that the Latino community college student population may double in the next few years. The U.S. Census Bureau (2013) supported these predictions by announcing that currently 1 in 4 children born are from Latino/a background. Therefore, more Latino children suggest more potential community college enrollees who are Latino.

The researcher believes that if leadership does not become more diverse, our community colleges will continue to struggle to serve minority students, especially Latinos. Struggles may include having inadequate systems such as proper training for faculty and staff, shortage of bilingual employees, a campus that is not welcoming, and, most importantly, lack of leaders who look like the student population. According to Rendon (1999), the problem is not that Latino students lack ambition or the ability to work; rather, they have not received the socialization, encouragement, and mentoring to be able to take advantage of higher education (p. 53).

The reality is that Latinos have a long history of underrepresentation in education and particularly in higher education, where their presence is limited at faculty and senior administrative levels. Gutierrez et al. (2002) indicated that the low number of Latino faculty members and administrators makes it difficult to acquire mentors for students and aspiring leaders in the educational system. This lack of Latino leaders has affected this ethnic group for many years, and the results can be seen when looking at the overall Latino/a student population retention, graduation, and completion rates. The researcher believes that Latino leaders can bring an abundance of knowledge to the table, especially

when it comes to working with a diverse student population. Their insight can improve services and the process of working with a diverse population of students because they know firsthand what it is like to struggle.

One of the major issues that the Latino population is facing, according to Gutierrez et al. (2002), is that Latinos in U.S. higher education have a poor pipeline of talent, starting from elementary and secondary education and moving upward (p. 299). Pipeline of talent, as the researcher understands, refers to the notion that there are not enough Latino/as who early on were given opportunities to excel. In 1999, the president of the United Negro College Fund shared data that were very discouraging: in 1977, only 164 Latinos received doctorates across all fields of education in the U.S., in 1987, 204 Latinos received doctorates in an education field, and in 1996, only 222 received doctorates across all areas of education (Gutierrez et al., 2002, p. 301). This clearly shows the poor pipeline that exists for Latinos.

Interestingly, AACC recently began a Future President Institute (FPI) in which current community college senior administration leaders are trained and prepared for the future challenges of community colleges in an effort to close the gap. According to the AACC website (2013), the FPI is an intensive five-day institute designed for senior-level community college administrators on the direct path to a presidency. Participants network with experienced community college presidents, industry experts, and their own senior-level peers. This program is open to individuals who hold a position of Vice President or higher, those who have completed the Future Leaders Institute, or those who anticipate moving into a presidency within the next two to three years (p. 1). The list of participants can be seen in Appendix A.

Looking at the list of names is alarming, because there seems to be a lack of

Latino/a representation. While a name alone does not indicate a person's ethnicity in

absolute terms, a name may reflect a person's lived ethnic experience. Opportunities like

this should be intentionally promoted to recruit and cultivate future Latino/a leaders who

are interested in pursuing the presidency. The researcher was able to find two initiatives

that have helped Latino/a professionals advance in higher education. The first program is

the American Council of Education (ACE) Fellows Program. According to Lopez

(2009), ACE has an excellent track record of preparing senior leaders for top positions in

higher education administration. According to the ACE Fellows Program, during the last

25 years, 70 Hispanic Fellows have participated in the program, and out of this number,

26 (38%) have reached senior-level positions in higher education administration and 7

have become presidents or chancellors (p. 14).

The second and perhaps one of the most significant initiatives occurred when the

AACC established the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) in

1985. According to the NCCHC website, the Council is the nation's premier

organization for preparation and support of Latino leaders in America's community

colleges; it is a non-profit, professional organization that is committed to delivering high-

quality leadership development experiences and providing Latinos with opportunities to

continue their personal and professional growth. The Council provides members with

resources, networking, and educational opportunities. The NCCHC has contributed

significantly, yet only few Latinos across the country have been able to take advantage of

this opportunity. Reasons such as lack of knowledge that this organization exists,

colleges' lack of support to fund these types of opportunities, and perhaps the fear of

asking are just a few reasons why NCCHC may be underutilized.   Regardless, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done when it comes to developing Latino leadership in the future.

Gonzalez-Sullivan and Wiessner (2010) mentioned a Hispanic Leadership Fellows Program that is sponsored by the NCCHC. The Fellows Program mission is to prepare Latino/a community college administrators for executive leadership positions, including the presidency (p. 44). Some concerns related to the NCCHC Hispanic Leadership Fellowship Program are that there is very limited space, the program is expensive, and the networking is limited to Latinos. The major concern is that in order for more Latinos to participate in these types of programs, institutions must commit and support these types of initiatives by allocating proper resources.

More importantly, with a growing Latino population and other minority groups, such as Asian and African American students, community college leaders must have more than just the basic skills mentioned by Hockaday and Puyear (2013). This researcher believes that community college presidents should be required to have a basic understanding of whom they are serving as well as an awareness of the diversity in their communities, especially since the minority student population of community colleges across the county has changed significantly over the past decade. For instance, according to the AACC (2013), many first-generation minority students are more likely to attend community colleges. A 2012 AACC report indicates that approximately 49% of all Latinos enrolled in higher education attend community colleges.

Bowen and Mullen (1996) stated that as the United States becomes more diverse, the community college will have an obligation to teach about and serve as a model of

diversity. According to Shaw, Rhoads, and Valdez (1999), community colleges have

been criticized for failing to acknowledge or adapt to the diversity in their student

populations. This has resulted in stubbornly low transfer rates and consistently high

dropout rates. Martinez and Fernandez (2004) suggested that community colleges should

change the way they do business and facilitate student success by becoming more

relationship-centered with a focus on internal and external collaboration with all

stakeholders. This would essentially allow minority students to be in an environment that

is more welcoming to them.

The Latino population is a perfect example of the demographic shifts that are

occurring in this county. Watson (2009) stated that Latinos are among the nation's

largest ethnic minority group in the country, and yet they have one of the lowest

percentages of graduation, retention, and overall degree completion. Watson further

stated that Latinos are among the least represented in senior leadership positions in higher

education. Clearly more has to be done to equal the playing field. In order to be able to

equal the playing field, we must do a better job of recruiting, supporting, and cultivating

future Latino/a community college leaders/presidents to help us mirror the increase of

Latino student population attending community colleges across the country.

According to the AACC, community colleges across the country will likely be

experiencing an increase in presidents retiring within the next 5 to 10 years. Since the

Latino population is significantly growing every year, the question is: What is being done

to support future Latino community college leaders/presidents who are competent to

address diverse student bodies? According to the CEO Characteristics on the AACC

website (2013), only 6% of community colleges in the entire nation have Latino/a presidents at their campuses.

Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to find literature or data stating where the majority of the Latino community college presidents are located; however, the researcher searched state by state to see percentages in each state. The results indicated that the majority of the Latino community college presidents are located in Texas, California, Florida, and New York. These states are largely populated by Latinos, yet the percentage of community college presidents in no way reflects the overall Latino student populations in those states. Interestingly enough, according to Dr. Antonio Flores, President of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), of the 3,500 colleges and universities located in the continental United States, only 102 have Chicano/Latino college presidents, which includes those heading two-year and four-year institutions (Rodriguez, 2007, p. 1).

Latino/a leaders may be able to provide different perspectives for the college and community. According to Gutierrez et al. (2002), in 1980 a social psychological study of Mexican-Americans, conducted by Lopez and Schultz, was designed to see if Latino administrators played a different role than Anglo administrators. The study surveyed 257 Mexican-American administrators in 93 institutions over 5 states. Gutierrez et al. indicated that Latino administrators did indeed find that their allegiance was high to both the community college and the community (p. 301). This study is important because Latino students and faculty members may be more likely to succeed if they have mentors and role models in their community colleges. Having a leader that understands the strengths and the struggles of a community can be very impactful and beneficial to the

entire organization. Although this study was conducted over 30 years ago, the researcher believes that the results today would be the same.

Therefore, the current case study research strategically used a selective group of Latino/a community college presidents from three states. The purpose was to learn more about the obstacles, advantages, and disadvantages during their journeys to the presidency. The goal was to shed some light on different pathways for Latinos/as interested in pursuing a community college presidency. The in-depth study focused on obstacles, culture, family, leadership, and pathways.

This study explored the personal and professional journeys of five Latino/a community college presidents from Texas and the Midwest as they ascended to the presidency. Through this study, an attempt was made to capture the rich personal and cultural experiences of the five participants as they told their personal stories about their journeys.

Research Focus

The research focus of this study was to explore the personal, social, and professional experiences of five community college presidents. Special attention was placed on events in their lives that played a pivotal role in their success. Culture, family, mentorship, obstacles, opportunities, education, and background were examined closely throughout the study.

The research was modeled somewhat after a study that took place in 2001 by the NCCHC at their 7th Annual Summer Symposium. In that study, participants were asked questions regarding their career pathways and the experiences that were important in their

journeys to the presidency. The results indicated there were three major principles that

played a pivotal role in their development:

1. Quality mentoring experiences,

2. Exposure to different college experiences and varying levels of
   responsibilities,

3. Participation in leadership programs, both informal and formal.

Sixteen participants took part in this survey.

Significance of the Study

Among the several reasons why this study is significant, the researcher focused on

three major reasons. First, it is important for the general public to understand some of

obstacles Latino/a community college presidents have to overcome to climb to the

presidency. It is well documented that it is very difficult for Latino/as to become

community college or university presidents. Haro (2001), Santiago (1996), and Esquibel

(1992) remind us that Latino/as are unfortunately held to different and higher standards

than their counterparts when applying to the presidency. Furthermore, Haro confirms

that Latino/a candidates are poorly understood and are perceived negatively:

> An underlying suspicion about the credentials and accomplishments of Latino
> finalist was apparent from remarks of numerous respondents who were
> interviewed. Comments were made that categorized Latinos as emotional,
> unpredictable, and unstable—hardly personal characteristics consistent or
> desirable for a college president. (1995, p. 202)

> A trustee at a two-year college was displeased by the appearance of a Latina
> candidate for president of the college. She said the Latina was wearing large
> earrings that appeared "cheap and distracting, reflecting poor taste." (2002, p. 2)

These data present a disturbing picture that can demoralize the spirit and attitudes of

Latino/a candidates. Going through this negative experience can affect many Latino/as

who seek to become college presidents. This study sought to provide an inside view of some of the obstacles that Latino/a presidents have had to overcome.

The second reason why this study is significant is to contribute to the body of literature that exists on Latino leadership, more specifically that which focuses on Latino/a community college presidents. The goal is to shed light on the positive experiences that Latino/as encounter in their journeys. More positive literature is needed.

The third and final reason is to provide current Latino/a students, faculty, administrators, and staff a blueprint for how to navigate the challenges. This study will be of value to any individual who is interested in pursuing a presidency in a community college system. Gutierrez et al. (2002) reminded us that leadership diversity at community colleges does not happen by accident (p. 306). Gutierrez et al. (2002) also indicated that listening to and observing others in leadership positions helps one learn what to do and what not to do (p. 308). These statements indicate that leadership is complex, especially for Latino leaders at a community college, because there are very few. Therefore, the researcher believes that it is valuable to understand the stories of these five community college presidents and how they were able to overcome and navigate the challenges.

Stories from these five individuals are valuable because their voices can provide rich information and understanding that can be used to assist in the development of future Latino/a presidents. This study also provides a blueprint for how to become a community college president for those who have been historically marginalized. Real-life stories are shared from presidents who were first-generation college graduates, former migrant workers, and first- and second-generation Americans who never imagined being in the

role of CEO. Their stories are told here because they are too often not told and captured. The hope is that the reader is inspired and energized by these remarkable stories.

Research Questions

The researcher attempted to answer the following research questions through this study:

1. *What impact did family history, culture, values, and education have in the lives of the Latino/a leaders interviewed?*

This is an important question because the researcher was interested in knowing how family history, culture, values, and education played a role in confronting obstacles in their professional careers. The question also attempts to gather information about the role culture and family played in their journeys to the presidency.

2. *Did the Latino/a leaders identify mentors, and what significant contribution to their development did they make?*

This question was designed to determine who these presidents' mentors were and how those mentors played a pivotal role in their development. The question also attempts to determine if other Latino/as were mentoring them or whether they had to seek mentors from other ethnic groups because there were few mentors who looked like them with whom they could identify.

3. *What unique leadership styles and attributes are common to Latino/a leaders?*

This question was intended to discover more about what makes Latino/a leaders unique. The researcher attempted to find out if family and culture had an influence in how they developed their leadership style and attributes.

Qualitative Design

The researcher selected a qualitative research design because it is appropriate for this study, since the goal is to describe experiences from each of the five community college presidents. Gall et al. (2003) stated that this is considered the "discovery" role of qualitative research, rather than the "verificative" nature of quantitative research.

Delimitations and Limitations

The research population used for this study was located in Texas and in two Midwestern states, which poses a limitation to generalizing across a broad spectrum of community colleges around the county. Also, because the sample size is only five, this poses a significant issue when it comes to representing the entire body of Latino/a community college presidents. The researcher understands that this sample size does not represent the experience of all presidents.

Dissertation Organization

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the problem, discusses the topic, and presents the research questions. In Chapter 2, the literature review, demographics and a brief description of Latino/as in America, leadership styles, and attributes are discussed. The chapter also provides a brief overview of the lack of Latino/a leadership literature in higher education, specifically in regard to leadership styles and attributes.

Chapter 3 provides the research design that was used in this study and describes the case study method, data collection, and analytic process. Internal and external validity are also covered, along with the researcher's biases and limitations. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the participant interviews and links them to the research

questions. This chapter also gives the reader an analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the research findings. Chapter 5 provides a thorough panoramic overview of the overall research study and conclusions.

The Researcher's Perspective

The researcher is a 29-year-old Latino male who is a first-generation college graduate and comes from a lower socioeconomic status background. I immigrated to this country at a very young age, I am a former migrant worker, and I aspire to become a future community college president. I have had to face many obstacles during my tenure at my current institution and will likely continue to face more in the future. This study serves as motivation for me and for others who have similar goals of one day leading our nation's two-year postsecondary institutions. While residing in Michigan, I have not had the pleasure of encountering many Latino/a leaders; therefore, I have had to challenge myself to reach out to other prominent Latino/as presidents from other parts of the country to gain a better understanding of their journeys and the obstacles they encountered.

The reason I am drawn to this career path is because community colleges are the only postsecondary education institutions that admit anyone interested in bettering their lives regardless of ethnic background, socioeconomic status, immigration status, religion, or any other identifiers. No one is refused admittance based on any of these factors. Open access to anyone has always been the community college way. Moreover, community colleges are more affordable and thus more accessible. Therefore, I want to be able to make a difference, not only in students' lives, but also in the lives of my colleagues and staff with whom I work.

Summary

In recent years, community colleges have experienced a significant shift in the population being served. Close to 40% of the student population in community colleges are from Latino, African American, Asian, and Native American decent, yet there seems to be a disparity among presidents of color and white presidents. Racial backgrounds seem to show that there is an issue with an equal playing field. Phelps and Taber (1996) argued that weak or indifferent recruiting practices, lack of commitment to diversity and cultural pluralism, and institutional racism have led to minimal and insignificant gains of minorities at higher levels of postsecondary administration. This study is intended to focus specifically on Latino/a presidents.

Steady progress has been made in the last two decades, because there has been an increased number of Latino/a presidents and women presidents hired in the past 10 years. Yet, there is still much to be done. For example, there are doctoral programs, like the University of Texas Community College Leadership Program, that have attempted to recruit more Latino students. However, these efforts need to continue to produce more community college presidents to increase diversity and improve the balance among administrators in community colleges across the U.S.

This research study is intended to inform educational policy makers, board members, community members, doctoral program directors, leadership institutes, and Latinos who aspire to be leaders in a community college context about the Latino/a presidents' experiences in the U.S. Storytelling plays a pivotal role in this research study. The five presidents retell their stories from their perspective, with the goal of shedding light on some of the opportunities and obstacles that they encountered.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This second chapter provides a summary of literature that examines the leadership styles and journeys of five Latino/a community college presidents from three different states. The researcher's intent is to carefully examine the Latino/a community college presidents' unique backgrounds and journeys that led them to the presidency. In order to support the study, the researcher used a comprehensive review of existing literature on leadership styles and attributes related to Latino/a leaders in a higher education.

The literature review process began in September 2011 and continued through January 2014. The literature review focuses on the following areas: (a) Latino demographics in the U.S., (b) description of Latinos in the U.S., (c) definition of leadership, (d) description of a community college leader, (e) leadership styles, (f) leadership attributes, and (g) the lack of Latino leadership literature in higher education, specifically in regard to leadership styles and attributes.

Chapter Organization

This chapter is organized into seven sections. In the first section, the reader will find national data in regard to the demographic changes that are occurring among the Latino population in the U.S. The second section describes Latinos in the U.S., as well as provides a comprehensive description of the different Latino subgroups. In the third

section on the definition of leadership, the researcher provides the reader with an array of leadership definitions that have been used to describe a leader. The fourth section, description of a community college leader, looks at existing literature that has been used to describe an effective community college leader. The fifth section on leadership theories describes the four leadership theories that were used throughout the study: transformational, servant, transactional, and charismatic leadership. The sixth section on leadership attributes looks at general literature that describes certain leadership attributes that are essential. Finally, the last section describes the lack of literature on Latino leadership styles and attributes in higher education and also describes Latino leadership in areas other than higher education.

Section 1: Latino Demographics in America

Research on current Latino demographics from the Hispanic Pew Research Center (2013) and U.S. Census Bureau (2013) indicates that Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the U.S. During the past 40 years, the Latino population has increased tremendously and, according to Sciarra and Whitson (2007), "In July 2001, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that Latinos had become the nation's largest non-dominant group with a population of 38.8 million, surpassing the African American population now numbered at 38.3 million" (U.S. Bureau of Census, 2002, p. 1). The U.S. Census Bureau (2013) also projects that Latinos will make up 20% of the entire American population by 2020 and over 30% by 2050. However, this is just a projection, and according to different sources, there could be an even larger increase in the Latino population by 2020.

How does this affect community colleges? According to Townsend (2006), "The number of 18- to 24-year-old Latinos is projected to increase to approximately 25% of

the American population by 2020, as compared to 13% in 1995" (p. 32). Knowing that the Latino population will increase is critical information, because Latinos have the lowest completion, graduation, and retention rates in all of higher education according to the data collected by several researchers and institutions across the country. Watson (2009) supported this by stating that "Latinos remain notably underrepresented at all levels of higher education; they also have one of the lowest overall education attainment rates of any ethnic or racial group" (p. 17).

This shift in student population can have an impact on the overall student success statistics, which can also affect funding sources. Townsend (2006) added that "as Latinos seek higher education, they will change the demographic makeup of individual schools, with the result that a number of majority-culture two-year schools will become Latino-serving or even predominantly Latino in a few decades" (p. 32). Understanding that this shift will be occurring in the near future will benefit community college leaders. More importantly, what are institutions doing to develop Latino leaders who can serve these institutions? Being proactive is essential to gain insight prior to the shift that will help leaders prepare and strategize ways to create a positive environment that is friendly to Latino students and the community.

In considering those areas of the country where Latinos have a significant presence, Townsend (2006) mentioned that "60 percent of Latinos live in California and Texas and it is not surprising to find 60 percent of predominantly Latino schools are in these states" (p. 25). Nettles' (1991) research found that "over 20 percent of Latinos live in four other states, each which has a predominantly Latino two-year school: New Mexico, Illinois, Florida, and New York" (p. 25). This information could still be

considered accurate today; however, we are seeing an increase of the Latino population in several other states across the country. It is important that other states keep in mind that demographics are changing rapidly.

As an example, the Lumina Foundation (2011) shared their finding that "in Georgia, the number of Latino residents was expected to rise from 150,00 in 1995 . . . to 189,000 in 2000 . . . to 226,000 in 2005 . . . to 279,00 in 2015 . . . to 346,000 in 2025" (p. 3). The Foundation concluded, "Georgia's Latino population has already surpassed 435,000; and today, it's nearly 854,000" (p. 3).

These kind of data reflect changing demographics not only in Georgia but in several other states in the U.S. The Lumina Foundation (2011) further stated that "the 2010 Latino population in most states have already exceeded the totals that the Census Bureau officials projected for 2015, and in only 11 states did the actual 2010 figures fail to surpass the 2015 projections" (p. 3). The growth is unprecedented and we can expect the growth to continue.

The Lumina Foundation (2011) also provided information regarding Latinos being the fastest growing ethnic group: "One in six Americans—nearly one in four (23 percent) under age 18—is now Latino" (p. 4). In addition, "their numbers increased by 43 percent between 2000-2010—a growth rate so rapid that the increase represents 56 percent of total U.S. population growth during that decade" (p. 3). This type of information is monumental for community college leaders across the country, because it portends an increase in enrollment of Latino students, even in places not traditionally associated with large Latino communities.

These data are important to understand because they raise the question, "What are higher education national leaders and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) doing to cultivate upcoming Latino leaders?" especially those Latino leaders who are seeking to become community college presidents. As noted earlier, Latinos have the lowest retention and graduation rates in the county; is this also the case in leadership positions? The fact that several Latinos are dropping out of high school and college might perhaps have an impact in the number of Latinos who make it to leadership positions. Many questions thus arise: Can a low-income, first-generation Latino student make it to the presidency against all odds? It is important to understand the hardships and barriers that Latino community college presidents have faced. Perhaps listening to their journey will shed light on some of the struggles and challenges that take place in the pursuit of a community college presidency.

Section 2: Description of Latino/as in the U.S.

Beyond the demographic shift and graduation questions, Latinos are a complex group of people to describe. According to the Lumina Foundation (2011), "Generalizations can be misleading, especially when applied to a diverse group that includes people of all ages and both genders—individuals whose cultural roots extend in many directions from Mexico to Puerto Rico to Cuba to Central and South America" (p. 4). Latinos, like Asians, are a mixture of several distinct national origins. These individuals can be placed into subgroups depending on the Spanish-rooted countries they are from: Spain, Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and recently even the

United States. Historically, the United States has several Southwestern states that belonged to Mexico pre-Guadalupe Hidalgo Treaty, which was before 1848. People living in those Southwestern states still primarily speak Spanish. These states include Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, California, Colorado, and Utah.

Understanding the term *Latino* is not an easy task; however, it is essential that community college leaders understand that there are differences among these individuals. There are many terms to define Latinos, depending on what environment they find themselves in and whether it is governmental, societal, or agency-related. Latino subgroups are also prevalent and can include such terms such as *refugee, undocumented foreigner, permanent resident foreigner, migrant farm worker,* and, recently, *U.S. citizens*. These terms will be defined in the subsequent paragraphs.

According to Cooper (1997), the term *refugee* is defined as any person who

> owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that county; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such event, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (p. 480)

The vast majority of the Latino refugee population comes from Cuba and, recently, Venezuela.

According to Kelly (1977), *undocumented foreigner* is defined as any person liable to deportation because he or she is in violation of the U.S. immigration and naturalization laws (p. 473). These laws can be violated if a person enters the country without the proper inspection, by using fake documents or fraudulently obtained documents, or by violating the conditions of the visa by staying longer than what was agreed upon.

Another subgroup is *permanent resident foreigner*. According to the U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services website, a permanent resident foreigner is any

person not a citizen of the U.S. who is residing in the U.S. under legally recognized and

lawfully recorded permanent residence as an immigrant (USCIS website, 2013). Legal

residents of this country are allowed to exit and enter the country at any time. However,

they are not eligible to vote.

Migrant farm workers are people who move from state to state, working on farms

harvesting fruits and vegetables, landscaping, working on dairy farms, or even working at

meat factories. According to the United States Department of Labor website (USDL,

2013), migrant farm workers are seasonal farm workers who have to travel to do the farm

work so that they are unable to return to their permanent residency the same day (USDL,

2013). Migrant farm workers are out of the ordinary because many could be refugees,

immigrant or resident foreigners, or U.S. citizens. Lastly, because the Latino population

has recently increased in the United States due to children being born from all of these

subgroups, including those who have been long-standing U.S. citizens, this has given

birth to a new generation of Latino *U.S. citizens*. More importantly, it is crucial that the

researcher mentions that there are a lot of Latino families that have been U.S. citizens for

over a century and a half. In addition, some of these Latinos still regard themselves as

having colonized origins.

The researcher would a like to acknowledge that the Latino diversity goes beyond

country of origin, immigration, and migration history. Latinos also have differences in

colonization history, race, language, linguistic pathways, and acculturation.

Understanding the term *Latino* and the various layers is valuable and necessary for any community college leader. A community college leader will encounter different subgroups and being able to distinguish the subgroups will be extremely beneficial when leading a community college, especially if it is predominantly Latino. Those leaders who can comprehend these complex terms will be capable of addressing the needs of this population more effectively. They will also be able to understand the different populations that live in their local community. The ability to be able to distinguish among all the cultures and identities is also necessary.

The researcher wanted to describe Latino leadership because it is diverse and complex, and many of the leaders who were interviewed might have encountered various hardships along the way, depending on their upbringing. By breaking down the various subgroups, the researcher wanted to give the reader a clear distinction between Latino leaders. Latinos come from various walks of life, and not all of them have the same hardships. Understanding those distinctions is what makes this research unique because it allows the researcher to critically analyze the different journeys. The researcher is interested in understanding how these Latino/a presidents dealt with these kinds of obstacles and challenges that they or their families might have encountered throughout their journey.

Section 3: Definition of Leadership

Understanding the literature on leadership is complex since its definition constantly evolves. Currently there are over 600 definitions of leadership that appear in a search of the Internet. According to Gooty et al. (2009), in the Old and New Testaments as well as in Greek and Latin classics, leaders were called prophets, priests, kings, chiefs,

and heroes (p. 1). *Leadership* is a term that continues to evolve because people are constantly creating new definitions based on societal needs or individual opinions. Over the past 60 years, more than 68 different leadership classifications have been created. In the following paragraphs, the term *leadership* is examined.

Bennis (1959) defines *leadership* as "the process by which an agent induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner" (p. 6). However, for Dennis and Meola (2009), leadership is about having the ability to inspire others to achieve beyond what is expected. Bennis's definition of leadership appears to follow a hierarchal approach, where specific orders are given and followed by subordinates, versus Dennis and Meola's definition, which requires more of a charismatic/servant leadership approach of inspiring others. Both of these approaches are currently being used by several institutions and leaders around the world. It should be noted that oftentimes when an institution follows a hierarchal approach, the morale of the employees suffers because of the lack of relationship-building among leaders and followers.

According to Davis (2003), Bolman and Deal (2008), and Navarez and Wood (2010), leadership implies movement, taking an organization to new heights, solving issues, being creative, and helping groups develop a shared sense of direction and commitment, as well as inspiring others beyond desired outcomes. Cohen and Brawer (2008) stated that "leaders are leaders only if they have others following them, and people are willing to follow only if they feel their goals are being furthered" (p. 152). We can determine that leadership requires a relationship in which someone leads and someone follows. At the same time, the definitions of leadership suggest that a relationship between leaders and followers exists. According to Frimpon (2012),

Leadership involves persuading other people to set aside for a period of time their individual concerns and to pursue a common goal that is important for the responsibilities and welfare of a group; leadership is persuasion, not domination; persons who can require others to do their bidding because of their power are not leaders. (p. 158)

For some people, leadership may seem straightforward, yet people still struggle with the definition because leadership is constantly evolving. While there is no single correct definition of leadership, there are several different opinions on what leadership is about. Cohen and Brawer (2008) suggested that there are common traits exhibited by people in positions of leadership, concluding that effective leaders are usually flexible, decisive, moral, courageous, goal-oriented, and scholarly individuals who are willing to take risks and have a concern for others.

Leadership can be examined through various lenses. For example, leaders can be found leading a family, church group, or an organization. The purpose of leadership is that decisions are being made and a leader is in charge of taking the lead. Having a leader does not guarantee success, because leaders often fail. The following section provides a brief description of a community college leader.

Section 4: Description of a Community College Leader

These broad and varied definitions of leadership can be applied or compared to what is required of a community college leader. Ivery (2009) stated that the community college leader must be an advocate for keeping the door of educational opportunity open for underserved and underprepared groups in the communities served, especially for minority, low-income, and unemployed groups that have little opportunity to advocate for themselves (p. 27). Nevarez and Wood (2010) argued that leadership in the community college, as a dynamic institution, is complex and, therefore, leaders must address the

changing needs of the students they serve with fluctuating resources: tenuous

relationships with faculty; financial uncertainties; ever-changing communities; external

stakeholders' demands; and shifting federal, state, and local support (p. 53).

Community college leadership is about more than the simple action of leading

others; it is about being aware of the demographic shifts, understanding disparities,

knowing about budgets and resources, and, most importantly, being able to adapt to

change. Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) suggested that a portrait of a community

college president includes integrity, judgment, courage, and concern for others.

Regardless of how we define leadership, community college leadership involves

an array of traits that can always be enhanced with theory, according to Nevarez and

Wood (2010). Leaders who have a solid foundation on theory and practical experience

will be able to easily advance work processes for those they supervise and, in turn, gain

trust from everyone around them, which ultimately benefits the entire institution.

Nevarez and Wood (2010) also asserted that "leadership theories provide a

template on leadership approaches based on research; leadership styles are patterns of

behaviors and actions used by leaders to influence individuals and the overall direction of

the institution" (p. 60). This statement captures the essence of how leadership styles can

guide community college leadership practice. According to Navarez and Wood, many

community college leaders rely on institutional practice and experience, but leadership

style is what distinguishes a good leader from an exceptional one.

Section 5: Leadership Styles

The following section provides a typology of the four leadership theories used

throughout the study. The researcher chose these four leadership theories because,

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unfortunately, there is limited research specifically about Latino/a community college leaders/presidents. Servant leadership style, transactional leadership style, charismatic leadership style, and transformational leadership style are the four leadership styles that will be discussed.

Servant Leadership Style

The first leadership style analyzed is servant leadership. According to Russell and Stone (2012), Sarros and Senjaya (2002), Greenleaf (1977), and Bolman and Deal (2008), in servant leadership, leaders have a duty to serve their followers. Servant leadership thus arises out of a leader's desire to serve rather than a desire to lead, without any self-interest, putting others people's needs, aspirations, and interest above one's own. According to Greenleaf (1977), the best test of leadership is, "Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?" (p. 6).

Sarros and Senjaya (2002) critically examined the core of servant leadership by looking at principles from Greenleaf's writings and Jesus Christ's model of servant leadership. The adeptness of being a servant leader requires skills far beyond education and experience. According to Greenleaf (1977) and Russell and Stone (2012), the traits needed to become an effective leader include compassion, empathy, listening skills, and genuine care for others. Greenleaf (1997) indicated that "servant leaders do not elicit trust unless followers have confidence in their leader's values and competence (including judgment), and unless the leader has a sustaining spirit that will support the tenacious pursuit of a goal" (p. 7).

Sarros and Sendjaya (2002), Russell and Stone (2002), and Greenleaf (1977) all agree that the servant leadership style needs additional research to establish it as a valuable and legitimate leadership theory. These authors all provided a theoretical framework for servant leadership style, and they all agree that rigorous quantitative and qualitative research is needed to establish credibility.

Savage-Austin and Honeycutt (2011) found that it is difficult for servant leaders to be effective in an organization that does not appreciate and/or support their practices. They gathered data from 15 organizational leaders who practice servant leadership. In their study, they concluded servant leaders employed in an organization that is unsupportive of their leadership model are usually unsuccessful, because they never fully develop. For example, Savage-Austin and Honeycutt mentioned that common barriers for servant leadership practitioners are the organization's culture, the fear of change due to lack of presence of other servant leaders within the organization, and the lack of knowledge regarding the philosophy of servant leadership practices. If a servant leader joined the U.S. Navy Seals or U.S. Marines and wanted to change the culture, the probability is that it would not be a good fit for the servant leader to try to change the culture in those organizations.

Savage-Austin and Honeycutt also stated that organizations that fail to allow servant leaders to excel are usually more focused on accomplishing individual goals and, in turn, end up losing sight of the larger picture. Followers working in this type of environment usually leave the organization because they end up experiencing feelings of insecurity and instability. Sarros and Sendjaya (2002) suggested that effective servant

leaders demonstrate a sense of community, empowerment, shared authority, and relational power (p. 57).

Russell and Stone (2012) and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) suggested that a skillful servant leader possesses 10 major attributes: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (p. 146). Honeycutt and Savage-Austin (2011) suggested that an effective servant leader has the ability to encourage input from followers in the decision-making process, which allows the servant leader to overcome difficult challenges.

According to Russell and Stone (2002), servant leadership style is somewhat undefined and not yet supported by sufficient empirical research (p. 153). As such, servant leadership has not been fully researched to the extent that this leadership style would have credibility. Critics argue that the issue centers on the difficulty of measuring the desire of individuals.

Transactional Leadership Style

According to Nevarez and Wood (2010), transactional leadership refers to an exchange between the leader and those whom he or she leads (p. 58). This type of leadership, in essence, requires rewarding the followers in order for the team to help continue reaching the goals of the institution or business. To an extent, this kind of relationship requires some type of agreement between a leader and followers. Nevarez and Wood described the follower-leadership relationship as one dependent upon a contingent award system: money for performance (p. 58). House, Puranam, Ramirez, and Waldman (2001) describe a transactional leader as one who operates within an

existing system or culture (as opposed to instigating change) by (a) attempting to satisfy the current needs of followers by focusing on exchanges and contingent reward behavior, and (b) paying close attention to deviations, mistakes, or irregularities, and taking action to make corrections (p. 134).

Burns (1978, cited in Bolman & Deal, 2008) stated that transactional leaders "approach their followers with an eye to trading one thing for another, such as jobs, votes, and/or subsidies for campaign contributions" (p. 368). Bolman and Deal attributed a rareness to explain transitional leadership because these leaders focus on more universal needs and purposes. These leaders as symbolic demonstrate courage and commitment by working toward resolving issues and depict a symbolic presence.

According to Nevarez and Wood (2010), Bolman and Deal (2008), and Bogler, Sarfaty, and Sheaffer (2011), transactional leadership is contingent on a reward system. The idea is that both sides help one another accomplish the overarching goal. Nevarez and Wood mentioned that several benefits to this leadership approach are apparent: (a) the interests of the follower are met by the leader; (b) organizational goals, objectives, and interests are met; and (c) followers and leaders are content with the dyad relationship. As long as both leaders and followers are fulfilling their promises, transactional leadership is a success. However, this type of leadership has several drawbacks: (a) followers will often maintain the status quo, never going beyond the contractual obligations required of them; (b) leaders' expectations are unlikely to be exceeded; and (c) the value and importance of the award can serve to motivate workers only for a short period of time (p. 59). The reality is that often greed takes over and followers may

expect more from the leader. This type of leadership may be more effective in a business setting than a non-profit and/or religious setting.

Charismatic Leadership Style

The third leadership style examined is charismatic leadership. According to Harvey (2001) *charisma* is a term introduced by Weber (1947) to describe extraordinarily gifted, highly esteemed and influential leaders in the religious and political arenas (p. 253). Charisma can be directly correlated to physical qualities and charismatic leadership traits such as height (taller), energy (high), articulate, charming, knowledgeable, and good looking. Crant and Bateman (2000) stated that charismatic leaders differ from other leaders because of their ability to formulate and articulate an inspirational vision and by exhibiting actions that create an impression that they and their mission are extraordinary (p. 64). Poon (2000) indicates that charismatic leaders are able to analyze the current situation, develop an ambitious or extraordinary goal (vision), and implement the strategies to ensure the achievement of that goal.

Choi's (2006) article discussed three core components of charismatic leadership (p. 64): envisioning, empathy, and empowerment. Choi elaborated on how these three core components play a significant role in the relationship between the charismatic leader and the followers, in combination with the motivational factors that define a charismatic leader. Charismatic leadership is achieved by stimulating followers' need for achievement, need for affiliation, and a desire for power. Stimulating the followers' needs can improve the followers' role perception, task performance, job satisfaction, sense of collective identity, group cohesiveness, organizational citizenship, and self-leadership.

According to Howell and Avolio (1992) successful and skillful charismatic leaders are those who inspire extraordinary performance in followers, as well as build a foundation based on the followers' trust, faith, and belief in the leader (p. 43). This skill helps charismatic leaders increase productivity of followers based on their ability to inspire the followers to be more productive. The charismatic leadership theory suggests that effective charismatic leaders inspire their followers and generate excitement among their employees so that they encourage performance beyond what is expected of them.

Transformational Leadership Style

Lastly, Nevarez and Wood's (2010) research defines transformational leadership as the act of empowering individuals to fulfill their contractual obligations, meet the needs of the organization, and go beyond the "call of duty" for the betterment of the institution (p. 59). Humphreys and Einstein (2003) pointed out that even though transformational leadership style is fairly new to management, it has been around for at least 15 years and research does demonstrate that it can positively impact employee satisfaction and the overall organizational outcomes. However, Humphreys and Einstein (2003) did raise an interesting point—that if people fail to understand the historical roots, then "transformational leadership" is at risk of just becoming a "buzzword" for helping organizational performance. According to Nevarez and Wood, transformational leaders serve as role models to others, emulating the characteristics, behaviors, and actions that they seek from all members of their organization (p. 59).

Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) researched the similarities between transformational and servant leadership styles and critically analyzed where both have the greatest influence on organizational culture. According to Smith et al., servant leadership

is a good fit with a spiritually driven culture (e.g., not-for-profit, volunteer, or religious organization), while transformational leadership is more successful at an empowered dynamic culture such as a traditional "business model."

Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) also explored the similarities and differences between transformational leadership and servant leadership. They suggested the biggest difference between both leadership styles is that transformational leadership is more focused on organizational objects, while servant leaders are focused more on the people who following them. According to Stone et al., transformational leadership has been well researched, while servant leadership theory needs further research support.

Smith et al. (2004), Navarez and Wood (2010), Humphreys and Einstein (2003), Russell and Stone (2012), and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) concur that the priorities of transformational leaders tend to focus more on the organizational objectives and less on their followers' individual needs. According to Russell and Stone, and Sendjaya and Sarros, transformational leaders transform the personal values of followers to support the vision and goals of the organization by fostering an environment where relationships can be formed and by establishing a climate of trust in which visions can be shared (p. 350).

According to Stone et al. (2004), a successful and skillful transformational leader builds commitment to organizational objectives and then empowers followers to accomplish those objectives (p. 350). They suggest that transformational leaders accomplish their goals by transforming the followers' values to help support the vision and goals of the organization, implementing four behaviors to achieve their goal: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Bass and Bass (2008) focused on the importance of a leader's ability to

articulate a clear and compelling vision, while inspiring subordinates' admiration, dedication, and unquestionable loyalty.

Table 4 was created to give a brief overview of each of the four leadership styles that were chosen to describe Latino/a community college presidents. It presents the benefits, drawbacks, attributes, setting where it can be used, and the leading researcher of each style.

Table 4

Overview of Four Leadership Styles

	Servant Leadership	Transactional Leadership	Charismatic Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Benefits	Focused on best interest of followers. Inspires others to be servant leaders. Compassion, empathy, listening skills, and genuine care for others. Brings good moral to an institution.	Exchange between leader and followers. Both agree upon a contingent award system. Interest of followers are met. Goals are met by both leaders and followers.	Inspires extraordinary performance in followers by building trust, faith, and belief in the leader.	Empowers individuals to fulfill their contractual obligations. Supports followers in order to gain support so they can go beyond the "call of duty." Always puts the institution first. Establishes a climate of trust in which visions are shared (unquestionable loyalty).

Table 4—Continued

	Servant Leadership	Transactional Leadership	Charismatic Leadership	Transformational Leadership
Drawbacks	If an organization does not support servant leadership practices, then leaders who practice this style will be unsuccessful. People who are servant leaders end up leaving organizations that do not support them because of feelings of insecurity and instability.	Followers maintain status quo. Followers never go beyond obligations that were agreed upon. Leaders' expectations are unlikely to be exceeded. Rewards can motivate followers only for certain periods of time.	Unethical charismatic leaders abuse their power to advance their own needs instead of the organization. Sometimes followers stay too dependent on the leader they become obedient to.	Leaders tend to focus more on institutional needs than their followers' individual needs.
Attributes	Listening Empathy Healing Awareness Persuasion Conceptualization Foresight Stewardship, Commitment to growth of people Building community	Pays close attention to mistakes, irregularities, and corrects them. Management by expectation (reward system).	Inspires extraordinary performance in followers by building trust and belief in the leader. Envisioning, empathy, empowerment, generate excitement	Idealized influence Inspirational motivation Intellectual stimulation Individualized consideration
Settings	Servant leadership can be used in any organization; it is more suitable for: non-profit organizations, faith-based entities, and some educational settings.	This type of leadership will be more effective in a business setting than a non-profit or religious setting.	Charismatic leadership can be applied in any setting: business, non-profit, education setting, and religious entity.	Business model
Leading Researcher	Robert Greenleaf (1977)	Burns (1970)	Originally advanced by Weber (1947) and Bass (1985)	Burns (1978)

Section 6: Leadership Attributes

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2013), leadership attributes are a person's qualities, traits, and/or characteristics. Great community college leaders often have a broad range of attributes that help them stand out from the general public. For example, some community college leaders may be known for their ethics, vision, creativity, compassion, honesty, courage, empathy, adaptability, flexibility, integrity, and self-awareness. According to Frimpon (2012), "Attributes act as predispositions, facilitators, and constraints which predispose and shape behaviors in a wide array of tasks, groups, and contexts; the greater the latitude provided by the situation, the more likely it is that attributes will shape behavior" (p. 59). There is sufficient literature that explores leadership attributes. One example is emotional attributes; they have been shown to be a primary indicator of great leadership attributes.

Goleman (1998) argued that truly effective leaders are also distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-reflection, motivation, empathy, and social skill (p. 2). These five attributes are imperative for leaders, because leaders who know themselves well are more likely able to stay true to themselves. In his research, Goleman found that when he compared star performers with average leaders who once were in senior leadership positions, nearly 90% of the differences in their profiles were attributable to emotional intelligence factors rather than cognitive abilities (p. 3). Also, Goleman indicated that without emotional intelligence, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he or she still will not make a great leader (p. 3). Clearly, emotional intelligence is a key attribute that cannot be ignored.

Another listing of leaders' attributes was found on a YouTube (2012) video titled "The Five L's":

- Leaders Lead—They can lead from in front and/or from behind; they usually do not give you the answers, but when they need to, they can also be prescriptive.

- Leaders Listen—Leaders will hear all the feedback and they will make decisions based on facts.

- Leaders Learn—Leaders are constantly reading and are curious to see how they can better themselves and their organizations. They usually look at what others are doing to improve. Leaders also create futures for others, but they are not able to help unless they are several steps ahead of everyone else.

- Leaders Laugh—They create unconditional support so that others may have "a can-do attititude"; they believe in people and encourage them to be better, and in return usually get 10% extra effort from them.

- Leaders Lose—Leaders take full responsibility; they do not blame others for the results.

These five attributes clearly describe all aspects of a leader, although these attributes are often ignored because they do not come to mind automatically when defining attributes that describe a leader.

Theory, along with practical experience, allows leaders to advance through a holistic approach. Nevarez and Wood (2010) mentioned that "leadership theories provide a template on leadership approaches based on research; leadership styles are patterns of behaviors and actions used by leaders to influence individuals and the overall direction of

the institution" (p. 60). This captures the essence of how theory can guide leadership practice. Many times leaders rely on intuition and experience, but theory is what distinguishes a good leader from an exceptional leader.

According to Tait (1996), vision, interpersonal skills, character, and drive are the four main attributes that are necessary for business leadership. Tait (2006) also stated that the majority of people valued experience and track record, interpersonal skills, commitment—particularly to the team, and independence above all in selecting their high-flyers (p. 30).

Attributes are important elements that guide any leader to success or failure. The research literature presents a wide array of important leadership attributes. The reality is that leadership attributes can be learned through studying theory.

Section 7: Lack of Latino Leadership Literature in Higher Education, Specifically in Regard to Leadership Styles and Attributes

Searching for Latino/a leadership in higher education literature is difficult due to a paucity of research on Latino/as leadership styles and attributes. That paucity of research on Latino leadership styles and attributes is one of the major factors that brought about this research project. The topic of Latino/a leadership in higher education has been overlooked and under-researched for many decades. This is one of the main reasons the four leadership theories—transformational, servant, transactional, and charismatic—were examined. The researcher felt that these four leadership theories might have been used by the Latino/a community college presidents who were interviewed in this study. For instance, there is literature supporting that Latino foreign-born or native-born individuals are brought up to embrace family and to contribute to their communities. The researcher believed that interviewing the five Latino/a community college presidents would provide

data that would enable future Latino leaders to learn about Latino/a leadership styles and attributes that exist.

One concern raised in the literature was the alarming high school dropout rates among Latino/as students. Those few who make it to college also struggle to graduate, as Latino/as have one of the lowest college graduation rates among all ethnic groups. Low graduating rates in high school, college, and postsecondary for Latinos present a major issue, because they contribute to a shortage of Latino/as with doctoral degrees. It may also be the reason why there is a lack of literature on Latino leadership in higher education. Castillo and Felder (2011) discussed the low rate of doctoral degree completion evident by the fact that, in 2008, African American and Latinos represented less than 4,000 of a total of 48,802 doctoral degrees recipients (p. 1). Of those 4,000 doctoral degrees earned by African American and Latinos, approximately 1,000 were received by Latinos, and only a few of those 1,000 were first-generation or low-income. The reality is that Latino/as are at a disadvantage in obtaining doctorates because of the various challenges and obstacles they encounter.

The fact that minimal research about Latino/a leadership exists is a concern, because the issue is not being given attention. Haro (2002) claimed that foundations such as Carnegie, Ford, Mellon, Rockefeller, and Pew Charitable Trusts have yet to consider supporting any type of systematic investigation into the lack of Latino/a presidents in higher education. He suggested that that foundations need to place priority on supporting research that investigates the challenges that Latino/as encounter when applying to senior leadership positions.

Vargas (2011) mentioned that, in 2010, the Pew Hispanic Center poll asked Latinos to identify key Latino leaders; only a few Latinos could name a person, and the most commonly mentioned person was Justice Sonia Sotomayor. Vargas argued that Justice Sotomayor is not an elected leader and has no formal responsibilities to lead any group. The only reason she was singled out was because she became the first Latina appointed to the nation's highest court—not because she led a movement, a constituency, or a membership organization.

According to Vargas (2011), Latino leadership will never be found embodied in just one person; it thrives among women and men, among the old and the young who lift their voices in defense and promotion of their constituents, be they Dominican, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, Mexican American, or Salvadorian American; immigrant or native-born; in South Los Angeles or South Carolina (p. 3).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to describe the qualitative research method that was used in this study by providing the reader with a rationale of why this methodology was selected. Since the intent of this study is to learn more about the five Latino/a community college presidents' pathways to the presidency, qualitative research was the best method for this study. According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research is described as "understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in their world" (p. 13).

According to Strand and Weiss (2005), researchers choose a qualitative research approach because they already have an idea of what they are searching for. "Mia Tuan . . . stated that only in-depth interviews allowed people to tell their own tales and enabled her to delve into themes, probes and follow different leads, and tell the rich, more personal stories that helped her understand the Asian ethnic experience" (Strand & Weiss, 2005, p. 4). This illustrates how qualitative research is significantly valuable for researchers who intend to learn more about an individual or group that is being studied. In this study, direct in-depth interviews provided the best chance of exploring the experiences and perceptions associated with Latino/a leadership development. Therefore, the researcher decided to use qualitative research for this particular study.

The researcher believes that the most efficient way to gather accurate data is by directly interviewing these individuals. As stated previously, qualitative research is a form of trying to understand people's experiences based on their own interpretation of things. Qualitative research was the best option for this study because the idea was to examine each president's own experiences.

The research design focused on a case study model. The researcher's intent in this study was to gain a better understanding, from the presidents' own experiences, of the challenges and advantages of being a Latino/a leader and how their Latino/a background played a role in their pathway to the presidency. The in-depth interviews that were conducted played a major role in understanding the journeys and leadership styles of these individuals.

Research Questions

The following three research questions served as a blueprint for this study:

1. What impact did family history, culture, values, and education have in the lives of the Latino/a leaders interviewed?

2. Did the Latino/a leaders identify mentors, and what significant contribution did they make to their development?

3. What unique leadership styles and attributes are common to Latino/a leaders?

The researcher will provide a brief description of each question to assure clarity and shared meaning.

Research Question 1: *What impact did family history, culture, values, and education have in the lives of the Latino leaders interviewed?*

The intention here was to help the researcher focus on the importance of each individual's upbringing and discover if family played a pivotal role in the individual's development as a Latino leader. According to Perez et al. (1997), Latinos tend to think in "us/our" rather than "I" terms; therefore, traditional Latino families often sacrifice their personal goals to enhance the welfare of their family. This collective mentality permits individuals to gladly exchange personal needs for the good of *la familia* (the family) (p. 182). Perez et al. further stated that this type of unity is summarized in the common Spanish expression *donde come uno comen dos*, literally meaning that two can feed from a portion for one; its implications, however, extend beyond food and include the person's entire well-being (p. 182). The researcher's intention was to explore the relationship between cultural background and leadership among these five Latino/as who took part in this research study.

Research Question 2: *Did the Latino/a leaders identify mentors, and what significant contribution to their development did they make?*

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2013), the definition of *mentor* is "a trusted counselor, tutor, coach or guide." According to Thomas, Willis, and Davis (2007), mentoring is provided by a senior colleague through support, feedback, information, and advocacy to a more junior or less experienced colleague (p. 179). Thomas et al. later stated that some of the many benefits of mentoring are guidance, support, enhanced networking, and feedback. These are all crucial in the development of an emergent leader. Therefore, this specific question was intended to address mentorship and the significant role it played in the development of the Latino/a leaders who participated in this study.

Research Question 3: *What unique leadership style and attributes are common to Latino/a leaders?*

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2013), the definition of *style* is "a particular way in which something is done, created, or performed"; the definition of *attributes* is "an object closely associated with or belonging to a specific person." The Latino/a leaders researched in this study are all community college presidents, located in different parts of the country. This question was intended to address if there is a uniqueness about Latino/a leadership styles and attributes among the five individuals interviewed.

Chapter Structure

This chapter explains the research design that was used in this study by describing the case study method, data collection, and analytic process. The final sections of this chapter address the internal and external validity, along with the researcher's biases and the study's limitations.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to gain knowledge about the experiences, pathways, and journeys of five Latino/a community college presidents. The researcher was interested in learning about their childhood and adulthood experiences and how those experiences shaped these individuals as leaders. Therefore, a qualitative research design was the best option for this study. Owens and Valesky (2007) defined *qualitative research* as "seeking to understand human behavior and human experience from the point of view of those being studied rather than the point of view of the researcher" (p. 441). Merriam (2009) believes that having an interest in knowing more leads to asking

researchable questions, which are best approached through a qualitative research design (p. 1).

According to Merriam (2009), a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system (p. 40). Stake (2005), however, focused on trying to pinpoint the unit of study—the case, and Wolcott (1992) saw it as "an end point product of field-oriented research" rather than a strategy or method (p. 40). Merriam stated that the "what" is a "bounded system," suggesting, in turn, that the case could be a single person who is in and of themselves a case example of some phenomenon, or a program, group, institution, community, or specific policy (p. 40).

Creswell (2007) described case study research as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observation, interviews, audiovisual materials, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes (p. 73). Qualitative inquiry is intended to collect data regarding one topic, while allowing the researcher to serve as a tool in interpreting the data (Creswell, 2007).

Since the focus of the current study is to interview a small group of Latino/a community college presidents, the use of a case study model is suitable for this type of study. This study used qualitative inquiry to be able to conduct the interpretive paradigm using similarities and differences among the five Latino/a community college presidents. The intent was to offer a more detailed "big picture" of how their individual and collective pathways led them to the presidency.

The research study uses a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of common and dissimilar experiences by all of the Latino/a community college presidents. One of the main focuses of this study is to give the audience a panoramic view of the Latino/a community college presidents' experiences.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is defined by several characteristics including: (1) natural setting, (2) researcher as key instrument, (3) inductive data analysis, and (4) participants' meaning. These characteristics are described below.

The first characteristic Creswell (2007) mentioned was *natural setting.* LeCompte and Schensul (1999) described natural setting as the place or point where people interact with one another, such as playgrounds, classrooms, meetings, street corners, people's homes, clinic waiting room, courtrooms, shopping malls, and workplaces (p. 9). A natural setting allows the researcher to conduct the interview in an environment deemed natural for the participant. Since the intent of this study is to better understand the journeys, obstacles, and successes of the Latino/a presidents, the researcher had to rely on interviews. Therefore, the best option was to conduct the interviews in a natural setting where the participant felt comfortable. However, in order to conduct the interviews face-to-face, the researcher had to establish rapport through email and telephone calls prior to traveling to the participants' sites to complete the interviews. Rapport is crucial prior to the interview because it allows the participant to trust further and, in turn, feel more comfortable.

The second characteristic is that of the *researcher as a key instrument.* According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), the idea that the researcher is the primary tool for data

collection may not be comfortable for those who believe that science is "objective" and

that the presence and interaction of the researcher in the field may bias the results (p. 2).

The reality is that validity of the researcher's role is established naturally, by developing

a set of questions that will be provided to all participants in advance. The researcher

develops the interview questions to be used in the interview, then conducts the

interviews, and finally gathers and interprets the data collected. Interviews are an

essential tool to allow the researcher to capture emotion and personal knowledge from

each individual. The researcher uses open-ended questions because they provide the

most effective manner of inviting the participant to share. In this study, the researcher

also used Latino/a leadership literature and personal experiences to help guide the

interpretation process for the researcher.

The third characteristic is *inductive data analysis.* According to Merriam (2009),

inductive data analysis is when researchers gather data to build concepts, hypotheses, or

theories, rather than deductively testing hypotheses as in positivist research (p. 15).

Inductive data analysis is relevant to the process of analysis by searching for common

themes found in the collected data. Common themes are crucial in order to be able to

find out if trends exist among the five participants and if those trends played a role in

their pathway to the presidency. A variety of methods were used, including transcripts

from the interview; video footage, if granted access; and public record interviews.

Sorting and comparing all the data provided the researcher with an additional level of

validity or triangulation to the in-person interviews. Triangulation is the use of multiple

methods, multiple sources of data, multiple investigations, or multiple theories to confirm

emerging findings (Merriam, 2009, p. 215).

The fourth characteristic is the role of *participants' meaning.* The main focus of the study was to accurately capture obstacles and successes in a chronological order of key events that occurred in the participants' personal and professional lives. The intent was to go back and review the data and determine how those events helped the participant obtain a community college presidency. Therefore, the researcher used different techniques to assure that no miscommunication occurred between the researcher and participant. Operational definitions were used in order to assure consistent communication and "probes." According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), probes serve to clarify, confirm, and elaborate, providing evidence and credibility that allow for more meaningful research (p. 6). Rubin and Rubin also indicated that probing questions add value to the interview, as they encourage the participant to keep focused while still allowing the researcher to dig deeper into questions.

Data Collection Strategy

In an effort to learn more about Latino/a leaders pathways to the community college presidency, in-depth interviews served as the primary method for data collection. The data that were captured from the in-depth interviews served as a platform to identify correlations that existed among the individuals. In addition to the in-depth interviews, resumes, scholarly articles, and books on Latino leadership were used to triangulate and validate the study through multiple techniques. Triangulation was used to confirm emerging findings. All of these techniques were used to address themes that were not captured during the five interviews. Ultimately, all the methods of gathering information complemented and built the "panoramic view" of what makes a Latino/a leader.

Unit of Analysis

According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999), a unit of analysis is the element

that is studied and used as a basis of comparison in the analysis of the study data (p. 118).

In the field of social science research, the unit under study is usually a person or a group

of people (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Common units of analysis in sociology are the

individual, the group, the organization, the social category, the social institution, and the

society (Neuman, 2004, p. 94). Neuman gave an example of 150 students who were

surveyed and were asked to rate their favorite football player. He suggested that each

individual is a unit of analysis, and each student's response is recorded. This is similar to

the current study, in which the unit of analysis was the five Latino/a community college

presidents, and each individual was a separate unit.

Interviews

Interviews play a pivotal role in qualitative research. According to Neuman

(2004), interviews are a way of obtaining information in a structured conversation in

which the interviewer asks prearranged questions and records the respondent's answers

(p. 183). A successful interviewer does an exceptional job of monitoring the direction

and pace of a social interaction, the behavior of the interviewee, and the content of

answers (Neuman, 2004). The interview proceeds through three stages, beginning with

an introduction and entry, then moving on to the actual interview and recording of data,

and ending with the exit, thanking the interviewee (Neuman, 2004). The most

challenging part of the interview is knowing how and when to use probes. According to

Merriam (2009), probes are questions or comments that follow up on a specific question

already asked (p. 100). Neuman describes a probe as a neutral request to clarify an

ambiguous answer, to complete an incomplete answer, or to obtain a relevant response (p. 185). Probes can be very instrumental when an answer is unclear, yet they can also be used as a tool to keep participants on track. Probing is a technique that was used during the interviews conducted in this study.

Beyond the stages of interviewing and the additional use of probes, what makes a good interview? According to Merriam (2009), the key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions; asking good questions takes practice (p. 95). Merriam also suggested that follow-up questions about how participants felt about a certain mentoring experience would elicit more affective information (p. 95). Sometimes during an interview, follow-up questions that were not considered during the development of the questions may arise. Therefore, the researcher makes adjustments during the interview if the participant triggers an unexpected question.

In regard to the current study, all five participants were selected by the researcher through a purposeful selection process. According to Merriam (2009), purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned (p. 77). Merriam further stated that, in a purposive sampling, participants are not selected to gain an average opinion that would correspond; they are chosen to participate precisely because of their special experience and competence (p. 77). The individuals who were selected for this study were among the very few Latino/a community college presidents in the country. This purposive sampling was initiated by recruiting candidates who fit the requirements. The major requirements were that the individual was Latino/a, a current or former community college president, and was willing to share his or her journey.

The individuals selected for this study (see Figure 1) were pulled from networks and relationships that the researcher established with the local community, such as Lansing Community College, Ferris State University, Michigan State University, American Association of Community Colleges, and colleagues and friends. For example, Dr. Walter G. Bumphus, President and CEO of the American Association for Community Colleges, provided the researcher with a list of six community college presidents, and from those six, the researcher was able to get two participants. Also, respected Latino leaders from the Lansing community highly recommended one of the five participants. Another participant was mentioned by the researcher's mentor, who highly recommended a specific Latino leader. The final participant was hand chosen by the researcher because of the individual's reputation, character, and willingness to participate in the study.
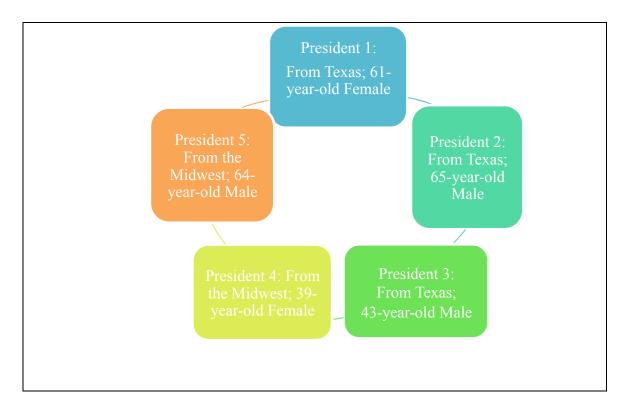

Figure 1. President profile, where they are from, age, and gender.

Three of the individuals who participated in the study are from Texas. Two other individuals are from the Midwest. All five of these individuals are Latino/as who are currently serving as community college presidents. Three of the individuals are women and two are men, all ranging from 39 to 65 years of age. Also, two of them are newer to the role of president because they have been in the position fewer than 3 years, whereas the other three have been in the presidency for 10 or more years. As an aggregate group, they have an abundance of experience. Combined they have approximately 40 years of experience.

The initial contact to each participant was made by extending an invitation through email, followed by a telephone call, and once the researcher received verbal confirmation, he finalized the selection process with a thank you letter confirming the individual's participation in the study. The researcher's goal was to conduct all of the interviews within a 1½-month period, from December 15, 2013 to January 30, 2014:

1. President 1 from Texas   December 2013

2. President 2 from Texas   December 2013

3. President 3 from Texas   December 2013

4. President 4 from the Midwest   January 2014

5. President 5 from the Midwest   January 2014

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were scheduled for 60 to 90 minutes in length. The dialogue discussed the participants' upbringing, family background, mentors, leadership styles, and hardships. The goal of the interviews was to capture rich data grounded on thick description. Merriam (2009) describes "thick description" as complete, literal description of the incident or whole being investigated (p. 43).

According to Rudestam and Newton (1992), the qualitative study emphasizes the "thick description" of a relatively small number of subjects within the context of a specific setting (p. 39). Thick description is used by researchers to provide a very detailed description of the setting and the overall study. Merriam stated that when rich, thick description is used as a strategy to enable transferability, it refers to description of the setting and participants of the study, as well as detailed description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participants' interviews, field notes, and documents (p. 227).

Thick description is supported by using triangulation. According to Rudestam and Newton (1992), triangulation means exploring the participant's experience in sufficient detail (persistent observation), and checking multiple sources of data such as other investigators, written records, diaries, field notes, and so on (p. 39). Merriam (2009) described triangulation as using multiple sources of data and comparing and cross-checking data collected through observations at different times or in different places, or interview data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people (p. 216). In short, triangulation is the use of multiple methods, data source, investigators, and theories. The purpose is to get as close as possible to understanding the experience of the participant in order to adequately analyze the phenomena.

According to Merriam (2009), pilot interviews are crucial for testing the interview questions; not only do they provide practice for the interviewer, but they allow the interviewer to quickly learn which questions are confusing and need rewording (p. 95). Merriam further stated that "using words that make sense to the interviewee, words that

reflect the respondent's world view, will improve the quality of data obtained during the interview" (p. 95). The researcher had the opportunity to pilot the survey during March and April of 2013, when several community college presidents were interviewed for a class project. During that time, the questions were refined to improve their quality, which helped increase the participants' understanding of the questions.

The researcher was also interested in the stories these individuals told and how they interpreted the world, as a tool of reflection. Storytelling is a powerful tool for other individuals who are interested in pursuing the presidency. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), the method of listening *for* a story rather than *to* a story is at the heart of the process of co-constructing narrative (p. 120). In other words, listening to the story, the researcher takes notes and starts structuring the participant's story. This is when the researcher begins to become an active listener in the actor's storytelling. This concept is important, because as a researcher, the idea is to capture themes of every individual's story.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. According to Merriam (2009), semi-structured interviews are between structure and unstructured, because neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time, so the researcher can respond to the situation at hand (p. 90). Three of the interviews took place on the participants' college campuses in their offices. Two participants were unable to meet face to face; therefore, one of the interviews was done over Skype and the other was over the phone. At each of the scheduled interviews, participants were asked to sign an informed consent. If the participant was not able to meet for a face-to-face interview, the researcher emailed the form prior to the scheduled interview. The

informed consent form included information regarding the participant's confidentiality rights, potential risks of participation in the study, intent of the research, intended use of the data that are being collected, and the participant's right to withdraw at any time during the process.

Interviews were audiotaped using a digital device and were transcribed by a professional transcriber hired by the researcher. According to Merriam (2009), the most common way to collect data is to tape record the interview to ensure that everything said is preserved for analysis (p. 109). Ideally, verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 110). Therefore, the researcher took notes and audiotaped the interview, then relied on a professional transcriber to transcribe the information to ensure that the data were accurate. Seidman (2006) stated that qualitative interviews are particularly suitable for studying people's understanding of their world, for describing their experiences and self-understanding, and for clarifying and elaborating their perspectives of their world (p. 35). More importantly, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) suggested that developing emergent themes is the first step in analyzing the data. Therefore, it was important that an expert transcriptionist be hired for this task to guarantee accuracy.

After the interviews were conducted, the researcher sent the participants the written transcript for review to ensure accuracy. Once the participants confirmed that the interview data had been properly transcribed, these data were analyzed and coded by the researcher himself.

The intent of this study was to contribute to the research available for other Latino/as who are interested in pursuing a community college presidency. Reading about

the experiences of other leaders will empower or inspire other Latino/as to gain perspective, insight, and knowledge and hopefully envision themselves capable of obtaining a presidency in one of the 1,200 community colleges across the country.

The Researcher's Role and Bias

In this study, the researcher served as the interpreter. According to Stake (1995), the interpreter's role is to find connections and guide the reader into an understanding of the study (p. 13). Listening to the five Latino/a community college presidents' journeys allowed the researcher to find patterns to help paint a clearer picture of the phenomena.

The researcher approached this research as a Mexican citizen who immigrated to the U.S. at a very young age with his family, in search of a better life. The researcher is a faculty member/advisor at a large urban community college in the Midwest. He grew up as a migrant farm worker, working in the fields of Texas, Tennessee, Georgia, and Michigan. The researcher is a first-generation college graduate. Because of this upbringing, the researcher experienced racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic and nativist discrimination. These experiences contributed to the data interpretation process. The researcher's role was to interpret the data from the interviews, and the researcher's personal experiences could have influenced the interpretation.

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research is particularly susceptible to research bias for two reasons: (1) the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, and (2) much of the research is grounded in the experience and interpretations of the participants, including the researcher (p. 22). The researcher recognizes and understands that there was potential for bias and an effort was made to limit bias from this study.

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Documents

The process of reviewing the documents resumed once the data were collected. The documents used to supplement the interviews were notes, audiotapes, the participants' vitae/resumes, along with multiple articles and books about Latino/a leadership. Once the in-depth interviews were conducted, the next step was identifying common themes. Patton (2002) suggested that data triangulation is a powerful tool that is used to strengthen the study by combining methods, such as using a variety data sources. Ultimately themes emerge and are flushed out to eventually shape the pattern and direction of the data, funneling toward a conclusion.

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Data Analysis

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According to Merriam (2009), data analysis is one of the few facets, perhaps the only facet, of doing qualitative research in which there is a preferred way (p. 171). Merriam further stated that the much preferred way to analyze data in qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection (p. 171). Since the research questions were created prior to the interviews, the researcher decided to simultaneously perform the data analysis and data collection at the same time. This strategy helped prevent the researcher from becoming overwhelmed and also helped him keep focused on answering the questions.

According to Rudestam and Newton (1992), qualitative data analysis can be greatly facilitated by the use of computer software (p. 181). Rudestam and Newton added that "analysis" rests almost entirely on the sophistication of the code system built by the researcher (pp. 181-182). Coding is when a researcher organizes the raw data into conceptual categories and creates themes or concepts, which he or she then uses to

analyze data (Neuman, 2004, p. 321). In other words, coding is a way of organizing and

classifying data of interest. There is no right or wrong way of coding. The important

component is that it makes sense to the researcher.

Through the coding of interview transcripts, the data were analyzed for recurring

themes with a focused caution. According to Yin (2009), using pattern matching and

time series analysis allows for a thorough analysis of the data collection. Pattern

matching allows for supporting internal validity. By looking at each participant's

transcript, the researcher is able to hone in on theme matching and differences that exist.

Validity

According to Neuman (2004), validity suggests truthfulness and refers to the

match between a construct, or the way a researcher conceptualizes the idea in a

conceptual definition, and a measure (p. 112). Merriam (2009) suggested that ensuring

validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an

ethical manner (p. 209). In simple terms, validity is how a constructed idea about reality

fits into actual reality.

Internal Validity

Internal validity is the form in which people make sense of research. For

instance, according to Merriam (2009), internal validity deals with the question of how

research findings match reality (p. 231). Triangulation is probably one of the most well-

known strategies to support internal validity (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the

researcher used triangulation as the primary source to validate internal validity by using

qualitative interviews, tape recordings, and written and oral communications to obtain

internal validity. Additional triangulation is embedded in the research due to the each

participant's presidential profile; their diverse personal and career stages make it a form of triangulation.

Member checks are another way to improve internal validity. Member checks are also known as respondent validation, where the researcher solicits feedback on emerging findings from some of the participants that were interviewed (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). Therefore, for the current study, the researcher used this technique to ensure that internal validation was obtained.

External Validity

External validity refers to the generalizability of the findings of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p. 29). Rudestam and Newton argued that the samples can change as the study proceeds; however, generalizations to other subjects and situations are always modest and mindful of the context of the individual's life. Merriam (2009) suggested that external validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (p. 223). The researcher used "thick description," previously discussed, to support and increase the external validation of this study. Merriam (2009) described thick description as complete, literal description of the incident or whole being investigated (p. 43).

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Anonymity and Confidentiality

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To ensure confidentiality of the individual participants, the researcher omitted personal names and their geographic location. Instead, each participant was coded and referred to as "President 1," "President 2," and so on. This was done in an effort to avoid potential risk to the confidentiality of the participant's personal life. Participants were

made aware of the potential risk involved because it is difficult to preserve confidentiality with such a small sample size.

Limitations of Study

The research population that was used in this study was obtained through personal connections, which poses a limit to generalizing across a wide spectrum of Latino/a community colleges leaders. Only Latino/a community college presidents were invited to participate in the study. No university presidents were considered for this study because the study was not intended to study university presidents. Finally, due to the small sample size, in no way does this study represent all community college Latino/a presidents in the U.S.

Conclusion

The research presented is a qualitative study focused on the journeys, pathways, and challenges of five Latino/a community college presidents. This study was limited to a selective group of individuals who have served as presidents in Texas and the Midwest. Prior to starting this research study, the researcher did an extensive search of community college Latino/a leaders and found that research was very limited. Therefore, the researcher made a decision to proceed with this study. The study will provide others the opportunity to read and learn about Latino/a leadership in the U.S.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Chapter 4 presents the research findings and analysis that were derived from the

five in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher. All five participants in the study

are present or former Latino/a community college presidents. Three of the presidents are

from Texas and two are from the Midwest. The chapter begins with the purpose of the

study, followed by the research questions, and then a description of the chapter's

organization.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the journeys of

Latino/a community college presidents. Special attention was placed on family

upbringings, culture, education, challenges, and opportunities throughout each of the

Latino/a community college president's journeys. During the interviews, the five

presidents provided rich dialog and storytelling about their family history, career path,

personal interest, leadership style, and challenges they experienced throughout their lives.

The five community college presidents who were invited to participate were all

selected based on ethnicity, geographical location, and personal connections. All five

presidents were either native Mexican born in Mexico and/or Mexican-American (U.S.-

born). Three out of the five presidents are first-generation college graduates and two of

them have parents who have attained college degrees. For the purpose of this study, participants will be referred to as President 1, President 2, President 3, President 4, and President 5 in an attempt to protect their identity.

President 1 is a female community college president who has served at two different community colleges for over 13 years and is currently a college president in Texas. President 2 is a male community college president who serves at a community college in Texas and has been there for over 6½ years. President 3 is a male and has been a community college president for just over 1½ years and is currently in Texas. President 4 is a female community college president who served as president for 4 years in the Midwest region. President 4 decided to take a break and do consulting work before returning to the role of president. President 5 is male and has been president for over 12½ years at two different institutions and is currently a college president in the Midwest region of the U.S.

Research Questions

The three research questions were:

1. What impact did family history, culture, values, and education have in the lives of the Latino/a leaders interviewed?

2. Did the Latino/a leaders identify mentors, and what significant contributions did the mentors make to the Latino/a leaders' development?

3. What unique leadership styles and attributes are common to Latino/a leaders?

These three driving questions were used as a foundation to craft interview questions that could help the researcher obtain effective responses. The questions utilized during the interview were the following:

1. Please tell me about your upbringing, family history, culture, values, and educational background.

2. Can you please share significant challenges you have faced throughout your journey to presidency?

3. What personal attributes can be identified within a cultural context that contribute to your leadership style?

4. Did you have a mentor throughout your leadership journey? If so, what was significant about this relationship?

5. What examples of persistence and acts of resistance were crucial in your pathway to the presidency?

6. Did gender roles within the Latino culture affect your decision to pursue the presidency?

7. What are the top three characteristics that a leader must possess? Why does this differ for Latino leaders?

8. What are your primary leadership attributes and leadership style?

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter will be divided into three sections. In section one, the researcher will provide the reader with a profile of each individual president. Each participant profile will include a snapshot of the president's background, education, and a brief history of his or her work experiences. Section two will discuss the five themes that frequently surfaced throughout all five interviews. Section three will answer the three leading research questions that were used as a foundation for this study.

President Profiles

President 1

President 1 is a bilingual woman who immigrated to the United States at the age of 2 years. Born in Chihuahua, Mexico, President 1 came with her father and mother and two younger brothers. She shared that she did not learn English until she started the first grade. She is a first-generation college graduate, who earned associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. During our interview, President 1 shared that she earned her bachelor's degree in 3 years. She shared how her high school counselor told her she was not college material, so she married right after graduation and started working but decided to pursue college once she left her home town. President 1 began her education at a community college, where she completed 59 college credits in 1½ years. She then completed her education at North Texas University, simultaneously teaching bilingual education at an inner-city school. President 1 shared the following statement:

> I actually did a lot of social work. At the time I did not realize it was social work, but the neighborhoods where I worked, the people were hard-working immigrant people. They just did not know how to help their children, so I was often driving them to different United Way agencies and help them by connecting them with people and doing all of that after school. I also translated for them.

Not long after earning her master's degree, President 1 returned to the same community college where she started as a student to begin a career in higher education. Her first position was that of Director of the Child Development Program. Soon after, she was promoted to Director of Institutional Effectiveness and then to Dean of Instruction. A few years later she was recruited by another community college to become the Executive Vice President for Instruction. This position led to another community college, where she was appointed college President. After a few years, she again

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returned to the community college where she was an alumna, to take up the role of that community college's president.

President 2

President 2 is a bilingual man who immigrated to the United States when he was 9 years old. He came to this country with his mother, stepfather, and three sisters. President 2 was born in a small town called Ciudad Rancho Viejo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. He is a first-generation college graduate, earning bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

During the interview, President 2 shared the following:

> In order to get my education, I worked at night and went to school during the daytime. I actually worked at a flourmill, loading train wagons with flour bags. I would go to school from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the afternoon; then I would go to work from 3 p.m. until 1 a.m., then come home, take a shower quickly, study for about two to three hours, sleep two to three hours, and get back the next day and keep going.

President 2 had no support from anyone once his mother passed away when he was 19 years old. After the death of his mother, his stepfather and sisters moved to another state, leaving him to fend for himself. President 2 worked hard to pay for his own education.

President 2's first professional job was as a community social worker. He shared that he helped a lot of people and yet was disappointed not to be able to help everyone. After a successful short career as social worker, he received a job offer to become a community college counselor and instructor of psychology. As his career progressed at this community college, he became the Coordinator of the Psychology Department, which led to the Department Chair of Psychology Department, and a few years later he became the Dean of Student Services.

Shortly after, President 2 received a call from the local community college, where he grew up, to become the Vice President of Student Services, and he accepted the position. One of his mentors was the president at the community college. Soon thereafter, President 2 assumed the community college's presidency, a position he has held for 7 years to date. As a young boy, he never imagined he would be leading the institution where grew up.

President 3

President 3 is a bilingual man who is a second-generation Mexican-American. His parents were former migrant farmworkers and college graduates. According to President 3, his parents expected him and his brothers to attend college. President 3 earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. He has worked in the same college his entire professional career and was able to move up in the same organization to the presidency. He has been president of the institution for just over 1½ years. President 3 moved up the ranks as coordinator, director, dean, vice president, and, currently, president.

President 4

President 4 is a bilingual woman who is a second-generation Mexican-American. Both of her parents earned college degrees and always expected her to attend college. She is the youngest of five siblings. President 4 earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Her professional career started far from higher education, as her first job after she completed her degree was as a newspaper editor. Being a newspaper editor held her interest for less than a year, after which she switched to teaching high school journalism. After teaching high school journalism President 4 moved to a more urban area and was hired as a librarian for an elementary school. The Director for Libraries for the school

district saw potential in President 4 and encouraged her to become a faculty member/librarian at a nearby community college. Her supervisor at the community college encouraged her to complete her doctoral degree in higher education from the University of Texas. After earning her advanced degree, President 4 was recruited to the Midwest to become a vice president, then shortly thereafter she became president of a community college. President 4 stayed in this role for 4 years, and is currently taking some time off before once again returning to a career in higher education.

President 5

President 5 is a bilingual man who is a multi-generation Mexican-American. His family has lived in Texas for several generations. President 5 came from a family of migrant farmworkers and factory workers. He is a first-generation college graduate. President 5 comes from a family of five: his father and mother, and two brothers. He earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. His career pathway began as a bilingual first grade teacher, followed by 20 years in various positions within his local school district. After this time, he transitioned into a career at a community college where he first held a counselor position then moved to dean, to vice president and, finally, president.

President 5 stayed in his first presidency for 9 years. Currently, he is at his second higher education institution where he has been president since 2011. An interesting note is that President 5 started his college career where he is now president.

<p style="text-align:center">Themes</p>

The following section describes the five themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews. The researcher uses each subsection to carefully analyze the data and to

expound on the following themes. The five themes that emerged from this study were the following:

1. Value of Family

2. Influential People in Their Careers—Mentors

3. Perception that Kindness is a Weakness

4. Overcoming Adversity

5. Leadership Attributes

Value of Family

The interview began by asking participants to talk about their family history. This particular question quickly engaged them because every participant viewed family as the core of their existence. There was an instant passion that was clearly visible when they spoke about their families. All five Latino/a presidents stated that their families are the most important part of their lives and credit them for their success.

For instance, President 1 stated:

> My mother was my role model because she was an adult, much older adult going to college. She started out taking ESL adult basic education classes and over the years she was working and taking care of our family, and eventually earned a bachelor's and master's degree and became the department chair of foreign languages at a local high school. Actually her story and her journey are unbelievable, so by comparison, anything I went through was really nothing compared to her.

President 1 went on to say, "Mom and Dad are in their 80s and now Dad is amazing, too. Dad started out cleaning a warehouse for a glass company, and he now owns his own glass company." President 1 shared that her family suffered a lot but were very happy people because they had been successful in a time and place where they were not

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supposed to be successful, and where the odds were against them. President 1 shared that

she was the oldest and when one is the oldest, leadership development begins early:

> The oldest gets to do everything first. I learned English very quickly and I became
> the family translator, and I'd be involved in problem solving with adults because I
> would be translating and trying to figure out what the people in the States found
> acceptable or what they wanted us to do, and so on.

President 1 said that this experience allowed her to foster her passion by learning how to

take care of others and to problem solve and figure out ways to solve situations,

regardless of how dismal things may appear.

> Another valuable lesson President 1 learned from her parents was the following:

> When people were mean to us, they did not say, "Well, they are prejudiced." No,
> they would say, "You know what? As soon as we learn English and as soon as
> we learn the culture, things will get better. We do not know why they are doing
> this."

President 1 stated that this was a very valuable lesson for her because it taught her to

forgive people.

> President 2 shared the following about his family: "I learned from my stepfather

that I had to work very hard. From my mother, I learned that I have to self-sacrifice for

the future and that I had to believe in myself." President 2 went on to talk about how he

and his five siblings lived in a two-bedroom house and how earning a certificate or little

plaque meant a lot to his mother. President 2 shared the following statement:

> See, my mother would brag about me all the time and I remember growing up I
> would be in the kitchen studying in the corner and my mother would be bragging
> to my aunts. That became a source of reward for me to be able to do well in
> school so that my mother could be able to brag about me.

President 2 also shared that his mother was a very caring person who was always very

generous with her neighbors. President 2 remembered asking his mother, "Mom, we

don't even have enough for us sometimes. Why are you sharing?" She would respond,

"Because that's the way to be, I mean, at least we have some; they don't have any."

President 2 considers his mother the greatest teacher and mentor because she taught him good human values about caring for others, about sharing with others, and about not being envious. President 2 attributes his work ethic and self-discipline to his stepfather because he was a workaholic. At the age of 19, his mother passed away. Although President 2 describes this as a turning point in his life, he shares that "his world crumbled."

President 3 described his family as very caring, compassionate, and giving. For example, he stated:

> My parents emphasized, if you go to school and if you're successful as part of that, then you always have to give back. So you should really emphasize and always be mindful of the opportunities that you were given, ensure that you give back and that you provide others with opportunities as well.

Throughout his interview, President 3 talked about the idea of always giving back to others. He also talked about how his parents taught him to always be proud of who he was and where he came from and to always ensure that he practiced the golden rule—that you treat others as you would like to be treated. President 3 shared that because his parents were migrant farmworkers who sought a better life, they emphasized education and the value of hard work. President 3's family was always working together, teaching him an additional life lesson of the power in working in groups, because each of his family members brought along different strengths and assets.

President 3 stated:

> In both settings, home and organization, you want to bring people around the table and break bread, talk to them about what's going on. You want to be transparent and be able to say what you're doing as a family, what is going on, what we need, and what problems and challenges we are facing and, most importantly, celebrate this sense of engagement.

President 3 used family to answer every question.

President 4 indicated that she was the youngest of five children and was grateful to her older siblings for paving her way. President 4 stated, "Since I was the youngest, my brothers and sisters always checked to see that I was okay, whatever I was doing." President 4 described her father and mother as being very educated and very strict and proper when it came to their manners and with their roles and responsibilities of always working. The children mirrored or were expected to mirror the parents' attitude and work ethic.

President 4's father was a retired law enforcement official and her mother was a stay-at-home mom. President 4 described her mother as very nurturing, very mother-like, and her father as a very wise businessman, a strategist who taught her how to deal with difficult people or difficult situations. She described her entire family as being extremely supportive. For instance, once she had achieved her career goal in higher education as president, her sisters would often encourage her to publish at least one or two articles annually as well as present at national conferences. President 4 described her relationship with her family as very strong, to the extent that she still calls them almost every day.

President 5 talked about his family's journey to the Midwest as migrant farmworkers. President 5 also mentioned that they had to learn a lot early on, adding that it was especially difficult for his mother because his younger brother had Down syndrome. He described how his mother would have to carry his brother up and down the stairs because he was unable to do it alone. He described his mother as having a third-grade education and his father having a ninth-grade education, but both were very astute. President 5 explained that once they moved to the Midwest, his mother taught

herself how to read English by reading the newspaper. She would read word by word, trying to figure it out. President 5 indicated that his parents were very strict about school: the children were expected to always do their homework and were never allowed to be absent from school unless they were extremely sick. He described how his mother would iron clothes for people at 25 cents per basket, and how his father would perform various labor jobs. Eventually, all of them would work in the fields, in unfavorable conditions. President 5 stated,

> I remember, as a kid, hating it and feeling envious watching other kids playing as we were picking fruits and vegetables, laboring in the hot weather and carrying crates and our parents telling us, "Hurry up, we've got to finish this row by the end of the day."

Upon his reflection, this was a positive experience, because it taught him the value of teamwork and planning. Daily, the family as a group had to plan what they were going to eat, what clothing needed to be washed, and decide on who was going to work with whom when divvying up the responsibilities.

Moreover, President 5's parents knew that the only way out of poverty was an education. They instilled this in him and his siblings by constantly talking about the value of an education. With this, President 5 stated, "My parents taught us a value system that we had to be very respectful to people, do good for others, and have lots of faith in family, culture, and church." Another experience of significance that President 5 mentioned was that his parents valued giving back to the community. They were often volunteering at church and other community events.

Influential People in Their Careers—Mentors

Mentorship was a critical theme that came up throughout all five interviews. Each president attributed part of their success to mentors who believed in them and gave

them opportunities along the way. The following paragraphs highlight some of the

mentorship relationships that played a pivotal role in the journey of all five community

college presidents.

President 1 started by stating, "Well, really you learn from everyone, so if you

look at the big picture, you can honestly say that every one person you come in contact

with becomes your mentor. Even the children teach you a lot." However, a few moments

later, President 1 added:

> At the university I attended there was a woman by the name of Velma Schmidt,
> from Nebraska, and for whatever reason, she took me under her wing, and besides
> all of my family, she was truly an important significant mentor.

President 1 continued,

> What made Velma different from others is that she did not patronize me. Her
> expectations of me were higher than of other people. The message she was
> sending to me was: you're smart, you can do this, and I don't care who you are so
> get back in there and get busy.

President 1 shared that she did finish her doctorate with a 3.85 overall GPA, as well as

being nominated and winning the honor graduate student of the year award. At that

point, President 1 was 33 years old. President 1 then stated that "Velma's expectations

were exactly like the high expectations my parents set for me. The fact that we were very

poor and that often people did not like us did not matter." At the end, President 1 gave

credit to her parents and people like Velma and others who saw more in her than she did

herself.

President 2 acknowledged that his greatest mentor growing up was his mother,

describing her as a very wise woman who was caring, compassionate, and loving.

Professionally, President 2 gives credit to his best friend Ramiro, who literally grabbed

him by the ear, pointed him in the right direction, and helped him get back on track.

President 2 shared that Ramiro has always been at his side; he was the best man at his first wedding and has been like a brother his whole life. Ramiro helped him overcome his own experiences of being a Vietnam veteran and coming back with post-traumatic stress, mastering those demons and becoming a counselor.

In terms of his career, President 2 gives credit to Dr. Joe Rhodes for always giving him opportunities and believing in him. President 2 mentioned that one of the greatest lessons he learned from this mentor was to relax and to be happy. President 2 talked about Joe as being very influential in terms of helping him balance personal health, work, and school. President 2's other mentor and the one whom he considers perhaps the greatest in his career was a woman, Dr. Judy Carrier, whom he characterized as being tough as nails, and of whom everyone was afraid because she was perceived as a "battle axe." However, he described Dr. Carrier as always being very good to him. President 2 described her as very demanding, and at times she could come across as being very cruel just trying to help someone. President 2 mentioned that Dr. Carrier helped him believe that he could indeed become a community college president, and that was one of the reasons he always valued her friendship and mentorship.

President 3 started talking about mentoring by saying:

> One of the things that has been really important and significant for me has been more of an opportunity of having good mentors, and having folks that kind of saw something in me, which allowed me to develop and grow as a leader.

President 3 went on to state that his parents were his first personal mentors, but he also mentioned that many folks had invested in him, by providing opportunities and ensuring that he was successful. President 3 also spoke about reciprocity, by stating if someone gives you an opportunity, then there is an obligation that you yourself do well for others.

President 3 stated:

Several different mentors, usually the supervisors that I had early on, at least two of the last three most recent supervisors were really good mentors and they saw that I was young and eager and wanted to learn things and have the ability and capability to do specific projects or to lead.

President 3 went on to say that those supervisors/mentors gave him those opportunities by placing him into situations where they could nurture and support him to ensure his success. President 3 continued by sharing, "I do not think I would have been at the point where I am at, if not for that opportunity. Some of those mentors have been Latino and some of them have not." President 3 ended by saying that it is key to have a broad range of mentors ranging from various ethnicities, race, and gender because having different viewpoints is key in preparing one for a diverse environment.

President 4 stated that her first career mentors were the dean, her direct boss, and the vice president of instruction where she worked. President 4 stated that both of them encouraged her to apply to the Ph.D. program in education administration at the University of Texas. Her mentors recognized her potential and pushed her to finish within three years. At that time, President 4 confessed that she had no desire to become a college president; however, after being part of the Ph.D. program, she discovered that most of the people in the program became college presidents, and she, too, became interested in this as a career option, especially since both the dean and the vice president were there to guide her and support her.

After completing the program, an opportunity came up in the Midwest and that is when she met whom she calls the most influential mentor she has had in her professional life. President 4 described Dr. Knight as one of the smartest businessmen she had ever come across, besides her father, of course. In reference to Dr. Knight, President 4 stated:

I have always had respect for him, every day I watched him and I saw other presidents but I never saw anyone with his style, he really knew what he was doing, he knew how to do it and most importantly he knew how to do it better than anyone else.

President 4 also talked about how Dr. Knight had faced battles that 85% of the presidents never faced in their career and that she believed he could easily take on UCLA or Harvard and those schools would be an easy challenge for him. She went on to describe her mentor as a "superman," because consistently he produced topnotch results. Not only would he accomplish a goal, but he would make sure it was best. President 4 stated that she has never met someone like Dr. Knight. President 4 added that she probably will never meet anyone else like Dr. Knight, because there is only one of him every so often. President 4 admitted that to this day she draws on the knowledge of Dr. Knight when making decisions.

President 5 began by stating, "I cannot say that I had just one mentor. I think I had many and the significance of those relationships and encouragement I got along the way, having people that believed in me is very important." President 5 went on to mention that he tries to give back to others, be supportive, and mentor, because he felt very fortunate to have many opportunities. President 5 also stated:

I had people tell me that I could do something when I did not really feel deep down that I could, or I did not feel I was ready, and those mentors helped me build confidence. That is why we should tell our children, "Yes, you can; let's figure out how you get there."

The statement "Si, Se Puede" (Yes, You Can) resonates for him in that it gives people energy, ambition, and strength to do the hard work. President 5 mentioned that people cannot do the work for you, but encouragement should prompt a person and that's what

mentors did for him; they provided him with that support, encouragement, and self-confidence.

Perception That Kindness Is a Weakness

Being a kind leader can sometimes be mistaken for being weak. However, leadership has taught us that many styles exist. For Latinos, being kind is part of the culture and can often be misinterpreted as a lack of assertiveness or confidence. In the following few paragraphs, the five presidents share how they have had to deal with this perception. Throughout the five interviews, this was one of the four themes that constantly emerged.

President 1 started by stating, "I am respectful and compassionate to others, but that does not mean I am a doormat; I can be pretty tough, and have to be sometimes." President 1 went on to say that in this business one has to be tough. One also needs to learn to be tough-skinned, and, most importantly, not to take things personally. People need to remember that it is not about them; it is about the circumstances, the situation, and if they figure that out, then they can avoid feeling insulted. President 1 stated, "People say hateful things; it's their problem, really, not yours."

President 1 stated that being nice and tough at the same time is important but that you have to follow the rules, giving an example that even looking at someone cross-eyed can get you in trouble. Although she admits to always following the rules, it doesn't mean that she doesn't challenge them. President 1 gave an example that if a rule is not fair, she will challenge it and bring attention to it until it changes, whether it's a policy or any other rule that is wrong or misguided.

President 2 began by stating, "You have to be very resourceful in this business, and you have to have very thick skin; you cannot let people's criticism get to you." He went on to say that, depending on their background, Latino leaders have to be very tenacious, resilient, and consistent, because they are often challenged and have to deal with issues constantly. President 2 believes that, in general, Latinos are passive-tempered because of backgrounds characterized by humble and poor environments. President 2 stated that he had to develop a sense of self-esteem, because poverty and the ancillary products of poverty can be very devastating to a person, regardless of gender. He added that he has to be tough at times when he is being challenged, and even though he might be weakening at the knees, he always tries to stay strong. President 2 admitted that he uses a sense of humor to avoid becoming stressed. He used an example of his humor by sharing,

> I was at a national conference—the National Association of Community Colleges Hispanics in San Antonio—and they asked me, "What are some qualities that make you a good president?" and I said, "Well one, I am very smart, and two, I am very good looking," and there was silence. The whole room was silent and in the back of the room someone started laughing and all of a sudden the whole room was laughing.

President 2 commented that being kind, joking, and passive-tempered have been mistaken for weakness, when in reality, those are the three skills that have taken him this far.

President 3 began by saying,

> I've confronted some people, but I think it is always important as part of that, that you work with folks constructively, if they are necessarily resistant to you as a person or resistant to you professionally because of whatever the case may be, that you try to inform and educate them on your perspective and what that means to you.

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President 3 acknowledged that over time he has seen people agree with his perspective or just agree to disagree. Overall, President 3 is accepting of this attitude because this is an attitude or response one can expect to encounter in any organization. He offered some critical advice:

> I think it is important to always be professional and whatever it is, whether it is support and related to persistence, or whether it is kind of the lack of engagement related to your resistance, so as long as you are true to yourself and your values, and who you are, then I think you will be okay.

President 4 started talking about this theme by saying, "I am nurturing; I think that is a motherly way for me and that often comes across like people can take advantage of me, but then I push back and they did not expect that." President 4 gave an example of when she was in her early 30s, during her first presidency. It was difficult for people to respect her experience because they often based experience on looks and, in this instance, age. President 4 talked about how challenging it was for her to arrive at an institution and tell people who were 20 or 30 years older than she was to do something. This often did not sit well with people, especially because she was a young Latina woman. President 4 ended this segment by acknowledging and stating,

> I feel like I had to try 10 times harder to show them that I was tough, to show them that they did not scare me, or to show them I could make tough, courageous decisions that were good for the whole school and not just myself.

According to President 5, "Our people, I think, tend to be very emotional, nice, caring, and embracing people." President 5 shared a story about the initial reaction or pushback he got when he brought up the idea that he was interested in pursuing the community college presidency. People would tell President 5 to not go for it because he was too nice, he would be taken advantage of by others, or that he could not handle the difficult tasks, such as letting people go. In reaction to these responses, President 5

dwelled on it for a little while and arrived at conclusion that it was not just him personally, but thought "being nice" reflected his culture "messaging." President 5 then shared, "I had to fight then, I had to fight that perception, and I think we can be nice and tough at the same time, so I had to draw lines on when I had to be tough." President 5 supported this by giving examples of how he could be tough, how he could work with unions and negotiate contracts, let staff go, and then once he started getting more experiences, people starting perceiving him differently and seeing the leadership potential in him.

President 5 also shared that there are a lot of tough leaders and they are always tough and mean, and eventually people stop paying attention to them. He said that this is not his style; he is naturally easy-going. President 5 ended this portion of the theme by saying, "I don't think that if you want to be a leader, then you have to have a tough side. I think all it is incorporating the skills that you need to be more effective." President 5 reflected on how he balances his natural instinct of kindness to situations when he's required to be tough. He gives credit to his family and friends who have helped him improve his skills and support his efforts, recognizing that toughness is a part of his kindness and applying that to others.

Overcoming Adversity

Throughout the five in-depth interviews, a constant theme that emerged was that these five individuals had to practice persistence in order to overcome many obstacles. All five community college presidents talked about how others criticized their work. Consequently, they had to be vigilant and ready to explain themselves at any given time. Instead of applauding their success, some colleagues were monitoring closely, waiting to

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see if they were going to succeed. In the following paragraphs, the presidents describe examples of how they had to persevere.

When asked about what drove her to work hard, or what came up for her when thinking of working hard, President 1 mentioned that she faced unbelievable barriers; she stated that throughout her life she had faced barriers, so they never kept her from moving forward. President 1 talked about when she first arrived in the U.S. and how she was the one translating and negotiating with adults in order to help her parents. Throughout high school and college she was tested by hard work, by raising a family, and by progressing in her career. President 1 mentioned that she had to be great in all areas and that, in itself, motivated her to put forth great effort. President 1 also talked about being the oldest in the family, and how that leadership role prompted her to figure things out, defend her family, and always worry about them. This leadership role was naturally translated to her extended family and her community, as they later became her extended family. President 1 emphasized that a community college president needs to be well-educated and intelligent, because, after all, they are leaders leading highly educated staff. In addition, a good reminder is to always be prepared for a presentation, meeting, conference, or any public appearance, because others are always paying close attention.

President 2 initially shared,

For the first few years of my life, my mother raised me and my sisters on her own. I got accustomed to seeing her work very hard and sacrificing a lot to keep us alive in Mexico until she met my stepfather.

President 2 said he never met his biological father. During these formative years, his mother's sacrifices gave him a deep sense of appreciation for her and, in return, he has always wanted to make his mother proud. To this point, when he was 9 years old, he was

placed into the first grade because he did not speak English. During that first year he worked very hard, so that the next year he was moved to the third grade. Then by the following year, he was moved up to the sixth grade. At this point, President 2 became very academically advanced, demonstrated by advancing three grade levels in a short period of time. President 2's mother was very proud of him, bragging about him, which, in turn, gave him the drive to work hard to make her proud of him and his accomplishments.

Once his mother passed away when he was 19 years of age, his stepfather and sisters moved to another state and he had to make it on his own. President 2 stated, "Fear of failure motivated me; it propelled me to do well and to work harder than maybe most people." On the whole, President 2 had to deal with people who thought Mexicans and Mexican Americans were either not qualified or not at the same level of competence as Anglo Americans. President 2 always seemed to be criticized. For example, as a college freshman, President 2 shared that his professor of economics stated, from his position in front of the class, that Mexican children were pepper bellies! President 1 concluded with,

> When you fall down or somebody pushes you down, you get up, dress yourself up, and you keep it going, and if you see an obstacle or a challenge, either you go through it, around it, under it, or over it until you make it to the other side.

President 3 explained that his work ethic always drove him to work harder than others by always putting himself out there. For example, he shared,

> Put yourself out there. You have to invite yourself to the party. So understand if somebody says, "Hey, I'm going to go to this reception" or "I'm going to go to this panel discussion, would you like to go or is there anybody that can represent us?"

Every time there was an opportunity to lead new projects and they were looking for someone to invest in, he would do it. In essence, when interested in something, President

3 would always accept the opportunity in exchange for receiving some exposure.

President 3 said there were many challenges along the way, but those experiences helped

him develop strong critical thinking skills, and he is now a college president in his early

40s. President 3 ended by recommending "a strong work ethic of ensuring that your

work is consistent in what you do and how you perform and that you're consistent in how

you work with people."

President 4's experience was similar to the other interviewees, but she shared the

negative impacts of trying to balance it all. President 4 stated,

> People in their 30s are surfing, flying, skiing, going on lavish vacations, starting a family, and I was trying so hard to maintain my professional career and my own personal life that I ended up losing my personal life because I dedicated a hundred percent to the job. I was not taking care of myself.

President 4 attributed to this imbalance—for example, not eating healthy or having her

sleeping patterns off—because of internal and external colleagues and community leaders

who wanted to see if she could make it. She perceived through constant challenges.

President 4 talked about having persistence and never giving up. Many people

would tell her there was no way she could do the job of president nor accomplish goals.

In reaction to this attempted disempowerment, she took initiative and interviewed with

the local newspaper to outline her goals for the next three years. At the end of the three

years, she reviewed her goals and found that she had accomplished every one of the goals

she had set for the institution. The stress placed on her by colleagues and the external

pressures affected her. President 4 recognized that people were waiting for her to fail and

she did not want to give them that pleasure. Instead, this pressure to fail exerted by

others pushed her to work extremely hard.

President 5 commenced his reflection with relating, "I have faced many challenges all my life, especially up north, where people always told me that I couldn't do it. Many people put up roadblocks, but I had to continue to prove that I could." During President 5's junior year in high school, he undertook the challenge of running for class president. President 5 was bused to a predominantly white, middle-class school from his working-class side of town. He remembers vividly when one of his classmates said to him, "There'll never be a spick as president." This led him to question why he couldn't become president. He had friends from both sides of town, and he was the leader type and was very involved with church and the community, so in his mind he disagreed with his classmate. President 5 talked about the work ethic and determination his parents had taught him, and so he put his name on the ballot and won. This prejudice has challenged him during his entire career, when people always told him, "Well, you could never do that." The best ammunition President 5 had to face this prejudice was learning to say, "Yes, I can."

President 5 shared that he would work as hard as he could to be better than everyone else in order to break those barriers of racism and oppression, and during his senior year, he ran and was elected again as president of his class. President 5 mentioned that he was not sharing this to be boastful, but as reminder that he was aware that Latino/as can break down barriers by working harder than anyone else. The challenge that he encountered was that he could not just be as good as others, but he needed to be better as a minority person:

> Being Latino and having to fight every step of the way for what I have been able to accomplish has been difficult, but, again, I had help from others who believed in [me] and gave me a chance, so I never wanted to let anyone down.

President 5 shared that he is a big believer in prayer, that prayer is a big factor in all his accomplishments, and asking for strength and direction is an everyday thing for him.

Leadership Attributes

All five community college presidents shared several important leadership attributes; however, there was one that clearly stood out. This attribute was the importance of giving back to their communities. Each of the five participants proceeded to talk about the significance of paying it forward by mentoring others, giving others opportunities to excel, serving their families and communities, and volunteering. An excellent example of this leadership attribute is the fact that four of the five community college presidents that participated in the study became presidents at institutions near their childhood hometown or in the community college where they began their college careers as students/employees. Each president felt a profound responsibility to give back to their communities for the opportunities they were offered. The connections to community, giving back, and paying it forward are all examples of leadership in a cultural context.

Two other attributes that were mentioned throughout the five in-depth interviews were collaboration and persistence. All of the five presidents talked about collaboration as being a vital part of their leadership style. According to each of them, this was learned early on from their families, who taught them the importance of working together as a family. They each brought up the idea that they viewed their institutions as their extended family and that they strived to be transparent, to have a good sense of humor, and, most importantly, to be honest with those they served. The other attribute was persistence. Each of them mentioned several challenges they had to overcome and were

able to share ways of how they were able to succeed. The following few paragraphs provide examples of these two attributes.

For instance, President 1 mentioned that she tends to be very inclusive with her team. She commented that throughout the years she has learned to be a better listener, because she realized early on in her career that she did not have all the answers to the problems. President 1 brought up that teams are always better at coming up with answers to problems. She proceeded to state that she often has "thinking tanks" or "brainstorm sessions," where she and the team have an opportunity to come up with great ideas. President 1 stated that her priority was to remove barriers, and to find money and resources to make things happen.

In terms of persistence, President 1 stated, "Everything you do requires persistence. I cannot give you an example of anything that was easy, and I am sure there were things that were easy, but I do not remember them." President 1 further mentioned that getting an education required a lot of persistence and a lot of self-discipline, because you are changing and you are having to adapt to change, and people around you are having to adapt to change. She then shared that she constantly had to remind herself that things would work out. She proceeded with an example of her high school counselor, who told her she was not college material, and now she has her degree. President 1 attributed her success with family, friends, and community to persistence.

President 2 talked about the importance of collaboration with his leadership team. He stated that one thing he learned early on was not to be afraid to work with team members who are more intelligent and resourceful than yourself. President 2 mentioned that his team pushes him to be better, because they challenge him and help him look at

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things through a different lens. He shared that, as president, one of the main responsibilities is making difficult decisions; therefore, it is important to trust in your team and collaborate with them as much as possible.

President 2 went on to share that the greatest challenge for him was when his mother died. He felt lost, lacked motivation, and felt discouraged. President 2 proceeded to state that his ability to persist was what allowed him to be successful in life. He mentioned that the loss of his mother was the most difficult challenge he had ever encountered and that every challenge he faced seemed manageable because of the persistence he had gained by losing his mother at the age of 19.

Most of President 3's interview was about the importance of collaboration. President 3 is a strong believer in collaboration. He described his college as being a large, extended family. He stated, "It is important within an organization to be able to say things like, 'This is what is going on and this why we are doing what we are doing or this is why we are looking at these positions.'" Shortly after, he shared that he always welcomes feedback on positions, so that employees can share their input before moving on. President 3 also shared that mentoring and supporting others interested in becoming leaders is a key cultural attribute, because it is important to help others reach their potential.

President 3 mentioned that persistence to him is having a really strong work ethic of ensuring that your work is consistent in what you do and how you perform. He shared the following statement:

> I think if you want to be treated well, then should treat others the same way, so if they are respectful and nice to you, regardless of position or who they are, then you should also be respectful and nice to them, and that, to me, is a really important attribute, but it is also important in terms of persistence.

President 4 stated that she likes to help people be innovative. She shared, "I always encourage innovation." President 4 describes herself as the type of leader who is a cheerleader or coach type, because she is always telling her team that they can do it. President 4 also mentioned that she is no different than any other employee; her job is to support and encourage all her employees, and a big part of it is to encourage everyone to give it their all. An interesting thought that President 4 shared was that she always has students as the priority along with faculty and staff, and at the bottom is herself. President 4 stated, "That is my paradigm; that is what I live by when I go to work."

In regard to persistence, President 4 indicated that persistence for her meant never giving up. She shared how many people always told her she could never do this or that, and her response was always, "Really?" President 4 explained that she has had to be very self-disciplined throughout her career, because many obstacles had been placed in her path as a young Latina who became president in her early 30s.

President 5 stated that his primary attributes are being collaborative, adaptable, and reflective. President 5 said that he listens and tries to ask the right questions. He mentioned that he considers himself a servant leader, because it is a natural fit for him since he enjoys serving people. He went on to say that his attitude as president has always been to serve his board members and serve the faculty, staff, and students. He made it very clear that collaboration played a pivotal role in his success; he attributed that to his parents, who always taught him to involve each other in everything.

President 5 talked about persistence as always having an "I can do" attitude. He explained that so many times in his life he was told he could not accomplish many things in life because of his humble beginnings. He went on to mention that things are not

always positive and glorious. A lot of things come with being a college president, so being honest with himself was important. President 5 stated, "I think persistence is putting together a group of friends, other leaders in the community that I trusted, and I brought them together occasionally to offer me constructive feedback." Every time he was told he could not accomplish something, President 5 said that he just kept figuring out how get past it, how to move forward, and how to jump the barrier. He gave an example of when he was preparing for a 15-mile marathon that he slowly but surely had to build endurance. He said it took practice and tenacity and he just kept fighting, along with engaging in prayer.

Answers to Research Questions

This third and final section of this chapter addresses the answers to the three research questions that served as the foundation of this study. The three research questions were used to gather valuable information about the presidents' family history, career pathway, personal and professional struggles, their motivation, and their leadership development/styles. The research questions that were analyzed and answered are the following:

1. What impact did family history, culture, values, and education have in the lives of the Latino/a leaders interviewed?

2. Did the Latino/a leaders identify mentors, and what significant contribution did they make to their development?

3. What unique leadership styles and attributes are common to Latino/a leaders?

The researcher notes that the first two sections of this chapter provided the reader with rich dialog directly linked to answers provided by each of the presidents who

participated in this study. However, these last few pages will serve as an exercise in reflection on how the answers to these questions helped the researcher understand the value of this study.

Research Question 1

What impact did family history, culture, values, and education have in the lives of the Latino/a leaders interviewed?

The research results for this question indicate that family history, culture, values, and education played a pivotal role in the success of each of the five presidents. Throughout the interviews, the value of each of these four components was confirmed and supported by rich dialog directly from each of the presidents.

Family history. All five community college presidents shared a very elaborate family history. Their whole interview revolved around their family and how they helped them develop as leaders. This question about family triggered strong emotions in all five presidents, because it brought back memories of how they were treated as children, or about the struggles their parents and grandparents had to go through for them to have the opportunities they were able to experience. Talking about family allowed the five presidents to feel relaxed and comfortable, which permitted us instantly to build rapport. For the researcher, this was impactful, because hearing their journeys and stories gave the researcher hope that people with similar backgrounds have persisted, achieved, and resisted, regardless of how challenging of a situation they all experienced. Regardless if one is an immigrant, poor, soft-spoken, kind, or if English is a second language, these individuals were able to break the glass ceiling through a strong work ethic instilled into them by their families and circumstances of their lives.

Culture. During the interviews, culture was frequently mentioned in a very positive manner. For instance, each president spoke about including everyone, sharing ideas, collaborating, treating people with dignity and respect, and, most importantly, always giving back to others. They all made reference that this was part of their culture. In one way or another, they talked about Latino culture as being very family-oriented, and this characteristic is something each of them was able to create on their campuses. For the researcher, this was impactful because living in Michigan, Latino culture is not always talked about in a positive light, so hearing how these leaders have transformed entire institutions with their culture was worthwhile.

Values. Values was as important as family history and culture. The presidents talked about religion, prayer, work ethic, fairness to everyone, honesty, sincerity, and always doing well for the greater cause. What really stood out is in how they spoke about their religion and prayer practice so openly. This is a trait that the researcher has never experienced with other presidents who are non-Latino. In terms of work ethic, each of the presidents mentioned how they had to always work much harder than anyone around them because they had to prove themselves. Finally, being fair, honest, sincere, and always giving back is something that is prominent in the Latino culture, because the values are centered on family. Listening to each of the presidents reinforce that the researcher's values are aligned with the greater good, the researcher was inspired and comforted to know that he is on the right track; this also enables the researcher to continue to persevere in his own pathway to the presidency.

Education. For three out of the five presidents, education was not expected. They were first-generation college graduates who had to navigate the system individually, yet

relied heavily on family support and mentors. For the other two, education was an expectation, but neither of their parents earned a Ph.D., so they also had to force themselves to be trailblazers and break the glass ceiling. Each of the presidents talked about how education has allowed them to have an impact on the lives of so many. The researcher gained a lot of insight into the importance of obtaining a doctoral degree, because it offered all of them opportunities that otherwise they would not have had. Hearing these five presidents impacted the researcher's determination to finish and graduate with his doctorate.

Research Question 2

Did the Latino/a leaders identify mentors, and what significant contribution did they make to their development?

Mentorship was clearly a theme across the board for each of the presidents; each spoke very highly about the opportunities and guidance received from various mentors. They discussed how their mentors set high standards, regardless of barriers and struggles that each president had encountered growing up. This theme also led to examples of how they were allowed to take calculated risks and that mentors supported them the whole way. One of the greatest messages that came across was the fact that the mentors believed that each president could achieve his or her goals, and the mentors followed through with sincerity and demonstrated their confidence in the presidents' success with actions. Many of the presidents talked about how they were often told that they were not college material and that they were often looked down upon. They looked to their mentors to reinforce the idea that they could make it and gain the confidence needed to overcome adversity.

Another interesting aspect of this question was that the presidents talked about the duality of having two different kinds of mentors—the personal mentors they found in their parents and the professional mentors in leaders and colleagues who helped them forward their careers. Each of the presidents made it clear that family was a crucial mentorship component. As a researcher, it was a powerful incentive to hear about these relationships, and the presidents' own experiences have helped identify the characteristics needed in a mentor.

Research Question 3

What unique leadership styles and attributes are common to Latino/a leaders?

Leadership is one of the most researched concepts in education and business; however, minimal research has been conducted specifically on Latino/a leaders. Therefore, the following two paragraphs talk about the leadership styles and attributes that surfaced during the interviews with the community college presidents.

Leadership style. The two styles that were brought up consistently were servant leadership and charismatic leadership. The presidents stated that these styles almost seemed to have a more natural fit for them based on their culture and backgrounds. The fact that their families were very humble, caring, and friendly people gave them the necessary foundational skills in helping and giving back to others. Also, the commonality of a sense of humor allowed them to form that charismatic leadership style that requires so much energy and innovation. This points to the importance of having both characteristics of helping others and a sense of humor in a president. These two leadership styles were very fitting for all five individuals, and each of them has done an amazing job of creating an environment where employees are happy. The researcher had

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an opportunity to tour each campus, and in talking to employees, there was evidence that employees were happy and satisfied with the fact that these presidents cared and looked out for them. It was very powerful to see how these two leadership styles were put into practice on such different community college campuses.

Leadership attributes. Each president shared a variety of leadership attributes. In short, their attributes are worth mentioning in this section. President 1 described that one has to be confident when leading an institution, respect others, build on great communication skills, listen, collaborate, avoid taking things personally, and, most importantly, have a good sense of humor. President 2 highlighted that being persistent, honest, fair, communicating effectively, exhibiting a sense of humor, and collaborating effectively were keys to his success. President 3 shared that the attributes that define him were engaging others (collaborating), such as involving others in the decision-making process; being transparent, by being honest about everything going on in the college; having a good sense of humor; and, finally, communicating and informing everyone about changes and the overall state of the college. President 4 stressed the importance of being energetic, happy, engaging others (collaborating), communicating, and mentoring. President 5 emphasized being collaborative, adaptable, having a good sense of humor, using effective communication skills by listening to others and asking the right questions, as well as always reflecting on decisions that were being made.

Listening to the array of attributes served as a great learning tool for the researcher because these are the leadership styles that have proven successful for these Latino/a leaders. The common attributes that were shared by the presidents in this study were a sense of humor, collaboration, and effective communication skills. The researcher

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acknowledges to the reader that there may be additional commonalities; however, based on the interviews that were conducted, these were the three attributes that emerged. In terms of a cultural context, these three attributes stem from strong family and community ties, giving back, and persistence founded on a strong work ethic.

All five presidents had different pathways to the presidency; however, something unique compared to other community college presidents, because of their Latino/a background, was their motivation, determination, and persistence in overcoming challenges and discrimination. Another interesting finding was that all of them had to find support outside their community via professional mentors.

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 4 provided the reader with an in-depth analysis of the five interviews that were conducted over the past few months. Chapter 4 was also used to answer the three research questions that served as the foundation for this research study. Moving forward, Chapter 5 is focused more on final reflections, recommendations, and conclusions based on the researcher's perspective. The researcher must caution the reader that these reflections, recommendations, and conclusions may be biased due to the researcher's own personal background. All five Latino/a community college presidents had very similar life experiences to the researcher, and this may have had a significant impact on how things were interpreted in this chapter. In order to ensure the validity of the study, the research used various techniques that were mentioned in Chapter 3. These techniques include conducting the investigation in an honest manner, using a triangulation method, and using member checks to assure validity.

The researcher is aware that, regardless of measures taken and techniques used throughout the study, prior life experiences and the lack of opportunities to be around Latino/a community college presidents played a significant role in the development of the final reflections, recommendations, and conclusions of this research study

Chapter Structure

Chapter 5 begins with a brief description of the significance of the study, followed by a personal reflective summary of this research study. The third section gives conclusions based on the five themes that emerged from the research study, followed by an outline of recommendations for future research and practice. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief personal reflection and final conclusion that will offer a quick overview of the entire research study.

Significance of the Study

U.S. demographics are shifting rapidly throughout the entire country; however, data from various credible organizations such as American Association of Community College (AACC) and the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) have indicated that a significant disparity exists between the number of Latino students attending community colleges and the number of Latino community colleges presidents that serve as chief executive officers (CEOs). Over the past few years, there has been a significant improvement in opportunities; however, there is more that can be done to improve diversifying the overall leadership in the community college arena. According to Dr. Richard Duran (2014), the current president of NCCHC, "NCCHC is the premier organization for Hispanic leadership development in community colleges and our mission is to increase the number of successful Hispanic leaders in America's community colleges through leadership development" (p. 1).

As stated previously, we have seen positive improvements over the past years, yet more has to be done. Therefore, this study is essential because this research study helps people gain a better perspective from current Latino/a community college presidents

about their journeys to the presidency. Much can be learned by reading the stories of these five Latino/a community college presidents. The findings of this study may help doctoral programs, policymakers for community colleges at the national level, and community college board members to recognize some of the unique challenges these Latino/a presidents have encountered throughout their journeys, instead of simply accepting conventional stereotypes.

Recently, McClenney (2014) released an article about men of color, which begins with an introduction titled "Race Matters." McClenney tells her audience that

> the issues discussed in this report can be deeply personal and emotionally difficult. Moreover, they play out against the backdrop of both the nation's history and the continuing reality of inequity across American social systems, including health, child welfare, employment, criminal justice, and education at all levels. (p. 5)

This disparity of leadership is an issue that is extremely sensitive and controversial because, as Dr. McClenney mentioned, this topic is deeply personal and emotionally difficult for people to admit; however, it is a topic that needs to be discussed in order to try to close the gap, especially for the Latino community.

The Lumina Foundation (2011) states,

> For decades, Latinos students have succeeded in college at much lower rates than have their non-Hispanic peers. According to a 2010 report from the Education Trust, 13 percent of Latinos 25 years and older hold bachelor's degrees, compared with 39 percent of whites, and 21 percent of blacks. (p. 5)

This means that fewer Latino/as are coming through the educational pipeline. This may be one of the reasons why there are fewer Latino/as in senior leadership positions. However, this is not a valid excuse to justify the leadership disparity that exists today.

Through this research, the hope is that this "leadership disparity" conversation begins to occur at the national level. The American Association of Community Colleges

(AACC), Achieving the Dream, and the Center for Community College Student

Engagement (CCCSE) have started asking difficult questions about students of color,

particularly Black and Latino students. The researcher hopes that this topic of a

leadership gap surfaces soon. McClenney (2014) reminds us that this change is needed:

"Until higher education institutions fully embrace the charge of eliminating this disparity,

we cannot effectively serve our students, our communities, our national economy, or our

democracy" (p. 5).   This is true even more so for Latinos, who face an abundance of

challenges that include language, economic, family, cultural, and academic barriers.

Watson (2009) echoes this comment: "Latino students choose community colleges

because of factors such as their socioeconomic status, prior academic achievement, and

degree objectives" (p. 17).

Singleton and Linton (2006) and Miller (2009) refer to such dialogue as

"courageous conversations" and acknowledge that these issues are emotionally charged

and difficult. These courageous conversations are what have to occur at a national level

in order to accomplish significant progress when dealing with leadership disparity. Dr.

Walter G. Bumphus (2014), president of AACC, stated,

> When I was a student I didn't think to ask why there were no faculty members
> who looked like me. But I'm glad that today's students do. And I'm especially
> glad that the Center is asking that question, along with many others. (p. 2)

CCCSE has begun to ask the difficult questions about the lack of faculty and

administrators of color. An important step is to start questioning why there is a

disproportion in Latino/a senior leadership. Pressure is needed in order to move forward.

This study was greatly inspired by the researcher's curiosity in learning more

about Latino/a leadership styles and attributes. Since the researcher has spent his entire

professional career in mid-Michigan, there have been minimal encounters and

interactions with Latino/a leaders and/or presidents who are employed in the Michigan

community college system. Based on the researcher's personal experience, there seem to

be very few Latino/as in senior-level leadership positions in Michigan. The goal of this

research study was for the researcher to have an opportunity to meet and learn more

about Latino/a presidents' career pathways, their family background, challenges they

encountered, leadership styles, and their rich personal stories. Another significant goal

was to attempt to generate meaningful literature on Latino/a leaders, since it appears to be

minimal. This motivated the researcher to continue moving forward to ensure that this

research contributes to the existing body of knowledge.

Personal Reflection Summary

I was inspired, re-energized, and completely humbled by the opportunity to

interview these five present and former community college presidents. I was able to

benefit in numerous ways, especially personally and professionally, because I was able to

listen to some of the most intelligent and humble individuals who have helped paved the

way for me and other Latino/as. All five presidents offered sincere advice and

encouragement before and after the in-depth interviews. This topic is deeply personal to

me because I am passionate about helping to increase the number of Latino/as in

community college presidencies. I wanted to listen to some of the challenges and barriers

that exist for Latinos as they move into senior leadership positions.

Overall, I truly enjoyed the opportunity to get to know all five presidents. I was

humbled by how they trusted and allowed me to listen to their rich and powerful stories

about their family history and challenges.   I was a complete stranger from Michigan, and

they opened their doors and welcomed me with open arms. All five individuals seemed delighted for the opportunity to share their stories. It felt as if I had known them for a very long time. All five presidents shared that they had full confidence that I would maintain authenticity of their stories. This whole experience was a worthwhile learning experience, because I was exposed to some of the most amazing Latino/a community college presidents in the country. Their insight, passion, and commitment were some of the things that resonated with me.

As I reflected on the themes presented in Chapter 4, I was intrigued by similarities that exist among them. Worth noting is the fact that all five of these presidents appeared to have maintained a strong sense of cultural identity, regardless of the challenges they faced. During the interviews, each of them reinforced that they had strong roots to their ethnicity, culture, and family. In fact, family was the most frequently used word throughout each of the interviews; family is what encouraged them to be resilient throughout their journeys to the presidency.

Overall, this experience was extraordinary in many ways. First, it permitted me to witness firsthand their professional maturity, insight, and humility. I was also able to ask hard questions that were extremely personal and touching to some extent. Above all, it helped me to imagine myself in their shoes.

This research study gives me the opportunity to honor these five brave individuals by attempting to retell their stories. This is something I took very seriously, because the whole idea was to capture their stories so that the reader could get a clear picture of Latino/a presidents as a whole. All five of the presidents made significant personal and professional sacrifices so that folks like me can have a clearer guide to follow, since

many of them had no one like themselves to guide them. Through this experience I was able to establish a relationship with each of them that allows me to call them for advice. Again, their tenacity and work ethic are admirable.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: Value of Family

The findings of this research study indicate that all five participants have a deep appreciation and admiration for their families. The main theme throughout each of the interviews was family. It was clear that leadership attributes correlate to the cultural value and importance placed on the entity that is "family." When asked about family, each of the five presidents shared rich, powerful, personal stories about how much family meant to them.

It was clear that family played a fundamental role in the leadership development and style for each of them. During the five interviews, what came up consistently was that family extends to the students, staff, and community. For instance, President 1 shared that being the oldest allowed her the opportunity to figure things out in order to defend her family. That, in turn, extended to taking care of others and, suddenly, the students, employees, and entire community became extended family. According to the research findings, the consensus was that these five college presidents were group-oriented, collective-bound, and allocentric. It was interesting because each of these five presidents brought to the table their leadership strength, which was to create an environment that generated a sense of trust and happiness in the institution.

All five presidents indicated that servant leadership was a style that they gravitated toward because it involved serving others, giving back, being commited to the

growth of people, and having a strong sense of building community. President 5 shared

that servant leadership is a natural fit for him because he always has that attitude, even as

president. President 5 stated, "That's my job as president. I serve my board, faculty,

staff, students, and I deliberately think about how I do that, what do I give them, how I

serve them, so that they can do their best." President 2 shared that, growing up, his

family was always on survival mode and really never had a chance to help others.

However, now that he is established, he mentioned that he likes to contribute money to

good causes and scholarships for students; he likes to volunteer his time and participate in

things on and off campus. President 2 sees his role as serving others, and he attributes

that to his mother, who always helped others, and then to his first job as a social worker,

where he witnessed several inequalities.

In terms of balancing family and professional responsibilities, Presidents 1, 2, and

5 had been married for several years and appeared to be doing very well balancing all of

their responsibilities and commitments. President 2 had been divorced two times and was

in his third marriage. President 2 did admit that it was very challenging in balancing

work commitments and family, and he regretted some of the decisions he made earlier in

his career. He shared that work consumed his life at the time. President 4 mentioned that

starting a presidency in her early 30s affected her emotionally, physically, and mentally,

because she was working around the clock, attending every event and meeting on

campus. President 4 said that she felt she needed to prove herself because she was young

and was a Latina in an institution that was not accustomed to having a Latina leader.

Based on this feedback from the presidents, I concluded the following: the reality is that

balancing family and work is something that is extremely difficult for everyone,

including Latino/a presidents. Moreover, for the Latino/a presidents I interviewed, family life shaped a worldview that transcended a "way of being" in family to approaches in exercising authority in organizational life.

Conclusion 2: Influential People in Their Careers—Mentors

At the beginning of the study, the researcher assumed that family and personal friends were the people who were the primary supporting cast in helping each of the five presidents reach the presidency. However, this research study indicates that professional mentorship was, in fact, the key toward opportunities. Professional mentorship was an emergent theme of this study.

All five community college presidents brought up examples of how their mentors offered them various opportunities, such as inviting them to local, regional, and national conferences; allowing them to take on various responsibilities; and supporting and guiding them throughout their journey by advising them and challenging them. The research indicated that mentors were key in the success of all five community college presidents.

For instance, President 1 talked about her mentor (a doctoral professor) as setting higher expectations than anyone had ever done for her. President 1 shared how her mentor would tell her she was smart, and she could accomplish anything regardless of her circumstances. As the mentorship continued over the years, President 1 shared that her confidence elevated to a place where she was able to believe in her abilities to change the world from wherever she was standing. This self-confidence is what has led her to be president at two different institutions. President 3 shared that he had benefited from having several mentors, usually his supervisors, who saw his ability and offered to have

him lead projects. President 3 shared that his mentors gave him opportunities in which they could nurture and support him to ensure that he was successful. These kind acts of support led President 3 to climb up the ranks at the same institution and, eventually, almost two years ago, became president.

The reality is that if an institution has a culture or interest in supporting leaders, good things can happen. These five Latino/a community college presidents were able to develop professionally because people invested time and energy into them. Clearly this is a two-way street and hard work was generated by the Latino/a presidents; however, we cannot ignore the fact that mentorship is a critical component to the success of these five individuals.

Conclusion 3: Perception That Kindness Is a Weakness

This research study indicates that there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to the characteristics of a community college president. Based on this study's research findings, having a quiet demeanor is an effective leadership skill that all five community college presidents shared. A quiet demeanor is used to describe the five community college presidents as it relates to their style. All five of the presidents were great listeners, they each valued asking the right questions rather than dominating meetings, they engaged their teams in decision making, and, most importantly, they prided themselves in being fair. President 3 shared that after the first month of his presidency, he gathered some students, faculty, and staff together to discuss how the institution should look in 5 years. President 3 said there were almost 300 people at the discussion. He reiterated that leadership is engagement with others. President 5 shared that in meetings he listens closely so he can be ready to ask the right questions. President 5 also mentioned that his

ability to be reflective allows him to evaluate his actions, good or bad. The leadership

qualities that have been discussed are approaches used to help others instead of using an

aggressive approach to leading an institution. At times, kind gestures like the ones just

shared can appear as weak or soft ways of leading an institution; however, these two

presidents have been extremely successful because these actions are true to their

leadership style and personal upbringing.

Being quiet, kind, and humble may not always be associated with leading a

business, mainly because dominant leadership theories assert that leaders must be tough,

assertive, and authoritative to successfully lead a business. President 5 indicated that

when he first shared the idea that he wanted to be a college president, the reaction from

people was that he should not do it because he was too nice. These people stated that

others would take advantage of him, and that he was incapable of doing the hard stuff,

like firing people. However, what these five community college presidents related was

that being kind is part of a particular set of qualities that helped them have a successful

career leading community colleges. One of the presidents stated that his acting with

kindness, respecting others, and including them in process are what helped him move the

college in the right direction. President 3 believes that bringing people together with

different strengths or assets is always worthwhile, because you bring together a group

that can complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. President 3 suggested that

transparence, collaboration, and communicating are fundamental to his success as

president.

This study's findings indicate that being kind is not a weakness. For Latino/a

presidents in this study, kindness is part of how they were brought up in their culture.

Being kind is a specific leadership skill that is used to make everyone in the organization feel part of a team/family. The presidents shared that there were several times when colleagues attempted to take advantage of their kindness, and that they had to pull back and address the situation by being assertive and tough. Being tough sometimes meant firing people. In conclusion, being humble and kind does not prevent a person from becoming a community college president.

Conclusion 4: Overcoming Adversity

Overcoming adversity was another common theme among all five participants. Each community college president shared several personal and institutional challenges he or she faced on a daily basis. Some challenges included gender biases and age and race discrimination in their personal and professional lives. For instance, President 4 experienced age and gender biases because she was 34 years old when she first became president. She shared that it was challenging for her because she actually looks younger than her age, and many of her subordinates were not used to seeing a young woman of color who looked like a student leading the institution. President 4 recalled, "It was very challenging for me to walk in there and ask people who were 20 to 30 years older than I to do something." President 5 experienced ethnic discrimination when he first moved to the Midwest. He shared, "I remember my junior year; I wanted to run for junior class president and I remember it so vividly, one of my classmates said, 'There'll never be a spick as president.'" Eventually he became the junior and senior class president, but he had to work 10 times harder than his non-Latino counterparts. In conclusion, all five presidents encountered many obstacles. However, their cultural values, spirituality, family, and professional mentors were instrumental in helping them overcome adversity.

These five presidents shared rich stories describing many difficulties they experienced yet acknowledged that it was their support group that encouraged them to persevere. In short, these five Latino presidents relied heavily on those around them.

Conclusion 5: Leadership Attributes

This study reveals the fact that all five of the Latino/a community college presidents use a servant leadership approach as their primary leadership style. The leadership attributes that surfaced throughout the interviews were respecting others, listening, collaborating, being honest, showing fairness, being transparent, mentoring others, and always reflecting on decisions that are being made. Respect for others, honesty, and listening are all values that were ingrained in these five presidents by their families. These leadership attributes seemed natural to these participants based on the examples that have been shared throughout Chapters 4 and 5.

Collaboration, fairness, transparency, mentoring of others, and reflecting on decisions are all attributes that Latino/a families use to help one another be successful. For instance, President 3 shared the following example: "A personal leadership attribute is my sense of family both at home and professionally, in that I know everyone plays a key role." President 3 continued to say that including everyone in discussion and decision making is key because everyone needs to know what is going on; he also shared that welcoming feedback is critical as well. President 5 stated that he was brought up in family-oriented home that taught him to be a team worker and also to plan and collaborate with his family. President 5 shared how each evening he and his family would plan out the next day, before going into the tomato and cherry fields; he said each person had responsibilities, and those skills easily transferred into his leadership skills as

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he climbed up the ladder. Each of these leadership attributes that the presidents shared has deep roots in servant leadership.

What the researcher found was that these leadership attributes were embedded in the participants by their families who taught them to look out for one another regardless of the situation. Also, being a servant leader was something that each of these individuals learned at home, and each learned how to apply it successfully to their careers.

Recommendations for Practice

This section offers recommendations for future practice. This is intended to improve leadership practices for Latino/as on a local, state, and national level in community college and community college policymaking in higher education.

> **Recommendation:** *Create formalized programs for Latino/as who are interested in pursuing the community college presidency by offering specialized workshops, training, mentorship opportunities, orientation, preparation, and support systems.*

Through this research, the hope is that discussions about "leadership disparities" begin at a national level, because there appears to be a lack of opportunities to help Latino/as who are interested in becoming community college presidents. For example, if a person of Latino/a background is identified by the community college president or in a doctorate program as having strong potential for becoming a future community college president, there should be a formalized process to help this individual navigate an unfamiliar system, especially since this is an ethnic group that is clearly underrepresented at all levels of higher education.

This formalized process can help alleviate some of the painful pitfalls that prevent Latino/as from pursing a community college presidency. We have to be able to learn from the mistakes that have occurred in the past and invite current Latino/a leaders to these trainings so that networking becomes more robust. Universities with doctoral programs must be willing to invite Latino/a faculty to diversify their teaching pedagogy. This formalized mentorship and training program should be offered at an affordable cost. The intended outcome is to create a direct pipeline that assists and trains Latino/as before they take on a presidency. In this way, they may be better prepared, which may help them stay longer in their role as president. We need to have a sense of urgency in helping Latino/as move into the presidency, especially since much of the community college population will be Latino/a students.

Recommendation: *Improve and/or create more affordable national fellowship programs for Latino/as to develop an easier and more direct pipeline to the presidency.*

Currently, there are very few national programs that intend to create a pipeline for Latino/as to become presidents. The other barrier is that those programs that exist are expensive, and often many institutions are unable to sponsor individuals to attend training programs. Some suggestions to improve this situation would be to create several quality national leadership programs by regions, which would make the cost more affordable. Perhaps a several college presidents from across the nation could come together a few weekends out of the year to offer a certificate of completion at an affordable cost. The reality is that current leaders must help pave the way and make this happen on a broad national level in order for it to work. National and local leaders have to be willing to

invest time and effort to make this project a reality. Grants must be seen as a viable option to help with some of the cost. Also, more national fellowship programs should be available to Latino/as. The intended outcome is that more Latino/as would have an opportunity to participate without worrying about not having the appropriate institutional support to attend the trainings.

> **Recommendation:** *Create opportunities for Latino/as with earned doctoral degrees or interested doctoral students to shadow or intern with current community college presidents*.

The University of Texas Community College Leadership Program has one of the best success rates for helping its students, regardless of race and gender, to become community college presidents. The university provides opportunities for its students to shadow and/or have internships with current presidents. This model is extremely beneficial, especially for Latino/as, who are granted an opportunity to shadow someone with a similar background. Having an opportunity to observe and watch someone from a similar background lead an institution can be an extraordinary experience. The goal is for more doctoral programs to offer this opportunity. This can really help Latino/as see themselves in the role of a community college president. The other recommendation is that doctoral programs teach about leadership by incorporating Latino leadership attributes and styles, which are often not taught. These things are important because they create awareness and comfort among other leaders who will be working with other Latino/as, or working at an institution that is predominantly Latino.

Recommendation: *Explore various doctoral programs to see if they are including Latino leadership content in their curriculum, which may help Latino/a doctoral students.*

Currently, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and colleges include very limited content on Latino history, culture, and leadership. Again, because of the limited percentage of Latino/as with doctoral degrees, fewer Latino/a faculty are teaching. Therefore, doctoral programs may benefit from bringing in more successful Latino/a community college presidents as guest lecturers to help Latino/a graduate students see themselves in the curriculum, and also to help Latino/a doctoral students network with national leaders. Again, this requires commitment at a national level. Pressure has to come from our current leaders to advocate for inclusiveness and diversity. There is also a sense of urgency because of the current issues concerning Latino/a students, such as immigration and language barriers; these are two topics that may not be of interest to non-Latinos. Therefore, if someone is not sitting at the table advocating for these issues, then no one will. It is our responsibility to advocate for our communities, and if we have leaders who are unaware of these issues, then we must do a better job.

Recommendation: *Create formalized training for new Latino/a presidents. This is an excellent opportunity for community college leadership to address retention of Latino/a presidents. The idea of hiring a Latino/a president is no longer enough; there needs to be a system in place to assist in the longevity so the president can improve the overall health of the institution and its community.*

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Once a Latino/a president is hired, it would be ideal if a national, regional, or local community college organization would have a group of mentors to help the new president adjust. Community colleges are currently facing several retention issues; there is a high turnover for presidents. One means of support would be to have other presidents offer advice and guidance for at least the first six months. Many Latino/as who are first-generation college graduates have had to overcome many barriers to reach the presidency. Accordingly, it would be worthwhile to create a system to promote their success and the residual effect of providing Latino/a students with accomplished role models. The goal would be to create a support system that can help Latino/as adjust to the role.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section offers a brief outline of recommendations for future research topics. The recommendations may help other doctoral students choose a dissertation topic or perhaps trigger other ideas. Some of these recommendations also address the direct improvement of this research study.

- One of the limitations of this study was that all of the participants were native Mexicans and Mexican-Americans from Texas and the Midwest. In the future, it would be worthwhile to include other community colleges presidents from other states and presidents from other Latin American origins in order to have a broader idea of some of the challenges that other Latino/as face.

- Compare the Latino community college journey to non-Latino/a presidents and explore the similarities and differences between these groups.

- Interviewing the mentors and family members of the Latino/a community college presidents may enhance the study by providing a more holistic picture of their journeys.

- Something that could add credibility to the overall study would be comparing the journeys of the Latino/a community college president to the Latino/a university president. The researcher assumes that there is a significant difference in career journeys and perhaps even differences in personal life stories.

- Explore how religion and spirituality play a role in the lives of Latino/a presidents.

- Interview retired Latino/a community college presidents to gather retrospective perspectives.

Personal Reflection and Final Conclusion

This study was initially inspired by the desire to learn more about the leadership journeys of Latino/a leaders, and it slowly evolved into raising questions of why Latino/as are underrepresented in senior leadership positions at community colleges across the country. The idea was to learn about the individual presidents' journeys, but what came out was that each of the presidents faced several personal and professional barriers. If it were not for family support and mentors, many of them would not have made it this far. The honesty of each of the presidents provided some insight regarding what to expect in the future.

The interviews shed light on obstacles and opportunities. The five interviews provided the researcher with rich dialogue that brought passion out of each of the

presidents. Their personal stories allowed the researcher to draw conclusions.

Collectively, these stories gave the reader a clear picture of the leadership attributes that

each of them draws upon. The narrative used in Chapter 4 allowed for the participants'

own voices to tell their stories.

Lastly, this study was conducted out of respect and admiration for all of the

presidents who allowed me to interview them. All of them had very busy schedules, yet

they made time for the interview. Their struggles and sacrifices have paved the way for

several Latino/as, as well as myself, who aspire to become community college presidents.

Much more work is needed and more stories need to be told; however, this research study

is a clear sign that we are moving in the right direction.

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APPENDIX A

FUTURE PRESIDENTS INSTITUTE

Participant List - Future Presidents Institute Baltimore, MD June 23-28, 2013

Name	Title	Institution	Work Address	City	State
Kenya Ayers	Dean, Academic Enrichment and Engagement	William Rainey Harper College	1200 West Algonquin Road	Palatine	IL
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Susan Scaggs	Vice President, Jefferson Davis Campus	Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	2226 Switzer Road	Gulfport	MS
Deana Sheppard	Associate Vice President, College Centers	Lone Star College-CyFair	14955 Northwest Freeway	Houston	TX
Amit Singh	Dean of Academic Affairs	Cuyahoga Community College, Western Campus	11000 Pleasant Valley Road	Parma	OH
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APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

To: Dr. Noreen Thomas and Mr. Felipe Lopez Sustaita
From: Dr. Stephanie Thomson, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Application #131105 (Title: *The Journeys of Latino/a Community College President*)
Date: January 8, 2014

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*The Journeys of Latino/a Community College President*" (#131105) and approved it as *expedited 2F* from full committee review. This approval has an expiration date of one year from the date of this letter. As such, you may collect data according to procedures in your application until **January 8, 2015**. It is your obligation to inform the IRB of any changes in your research protocol that would substantially alter the methods and procedures reviewed and approved by the IRB in this application. Your application has been assigned a project number (#131105) which you should refer to in future communications involving the same research procedure.

We also wish to inform researchers that the IRB requires follow-up reports for all research protocols as mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) for using human subjects in research. We will send a one-year reminder to complete the final report or note the continuation of this study. The final-report form is available on the IRB homepage. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.