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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

LATINA/OS LEAVING LEGACIES: THE EXPERIENCES OF CALIFORNIA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership Administration and Policy

by

Vinicio Jesús López

June, 2013

Linda Purrington, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Vinicio Jesús López

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the many adults and children who stutter. Never let an obstacle impede you from following your dreams. Never allow yourself to get discouraged. What is important is what is inside of you. Fulfill your potential!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I wish to acknowledge because I could not have done this alone. To the five women who have influenced my life the most: academically, professionally, personally, or all three. To my eternal valentine and beloved Gabriela. Your intelligence, strength, beauty, loyalty, and kindness inspire me. Thank you for walking with me in every step of this journey. To my dear mother Luisa. You instilled in me the beauty of loving and trusting in God and that prayers do get answered. You protected me and showed me the value of hard work. To my late grandmother Bella. You were my first and best teacher. Thank you for instilling in me a love of education. It has become my passion! To Nancy Brooks. Thank you for encouraging me to pursue community college education as a career and for seeing in me the traits and qualities of a leader, even when I didn't. To Dr. Linda Purrington, my dissertation chairperson. You are the epitome of a great leader! Thank you for guiding and encouraging me in this journey. Your attention to detail is without equal and your warmth is endearing. As I progress as a leader, I hope to one day be as knowledgeable, insightful, and skilled as you.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o leadership in community colleges through in-depth interviews of current community college executive administrators. The portraits of the subjects offer a blueprint to Latina/os who have similar career aspirations; and more succinctly, provide insight into how Latina/o California community college executive administrators might mentor aspiring Latina/o community college leaders.

The guiding questions in the study inquired the experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators, how they contributed to their understanding of leadership, and the perceptions placed on them as leaders. The questions also explored the obstacles that Latina/o executive administrators faced in their rise to executive administrative positions and how they overcame these challenges.

This study utilized a qualitative approach and portraiture in methodology. The researcher conducted interviews with eight executive administrators. The interviews included 20 questions, with follow-up queries for clarification.

Eight themes emerged from the portraitures and their responses to the interview questions. These themes included mentoring, employment, experiences, professional relations, family, ethnicity, Board of Trustees, and professional development.

Four conclusions about Latina/os in executive administrative positions resulted from the data collected and presented in the study. First, the experiences, culture, and traditions of family lives provided the foundation and tools for success in academia. The second conclusion was that leaders followed diverse pathways in their career trajectories. The third conclusion was that mentoring is highly valued and deemed essential to career

advancement in general. Finally, the fourth conclusion found that Latina/o leaders in the California Community College system experience ethnic bias in their advancement to executive administrative positions and this bias exists specifically more for female leaders.

The recommendations of the study highlight that mentoring, professional development, professional leadership organizations, and sound collegial relationships are keys to producing effective community college leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction to the Problem**

With a large percentage of Latina/os living in the United States (US), some might seek to enroll in community colleges to obtain an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) Degree, or to prepare to transfer to a four-year college or university. Many of these students might seek mentors with shared experiences, and who provide guidance as they progress through postsecondary education. These academic and professional mentors are key sources of support for students seeking success in four-year colleges and universities. As a result of the growing Latina/o student population, community colleges must meet the need to recruit Latina/o faculty and staff for administrative roles, with the ultimate goal of preparing them to assume Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions.

Latina/o executive administrators might be helpful in advocating for the educational success of Latina/os by supporting policies and resources that increase the number of Latina/o students who complete postsecondary education. For Latina/o students entering community colleges, the inclusion of Latina/o faculty, staff, and administrators is powerful because it solidifies an organizations commitment to ensuring student success (Santiago, 1996). Collaborating with Latina/o personnel who might provide unique perspectives from their own experiences of education or to provide academic support as students begin their college studies is important to their academic persistence and success. One reason that many Latina/os flounder in community colleges is that most do not have adequate mentors or role models who can guide them through the maze of services and programs they offer. A familiar voice or a person with shared experiences can do much for the success of Latina/o students. As more Latina/o students continue to enroll in community colleges there is a need to develop more CEOs who can



be a voice for the underrepresented and advocate for their growth as academicians and professionals.

Approximately 45% to 50% of students in postsecondary education attend community colleges and only 50% of those students make it to a four-year college or university. Subsequently, of those who make it to a four-year school, only 25% obtain a BA or BS Degree (Center for Student Success, 2007). The high number of Latina/os attending community colleges might be attributed to the following factors: (a) there are no entrance requirements, an access to all or open door policy exists; (b) California community colleges have lower tuition and fees compared to public and private colleges and universities, or community colleges in other states; and (c) large numbers of Latina/o students lack the basic skills, reading, writing, and mathematics, to be successful with college level course work. Therefore, many Latina/o students enroll in two-year colleges to strengthen academic skillsets before transferring to four-year colleges and universities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Latina/os have grown into the largest ethnic group in the US and many seek to attend community colleges as a pathway to reaching a four-year college or university. The presence of Latina/o executive administrators in California community colleges is imperative to the development and success of Latina/o students because they might serve as mentors who provide insight into what can be expected as Latina/o students enroll in postsecondary education. There is an under-representation of Latina/o community college administrators and this number is disproportionate to the number of Latina/o students served in California community colleges, which was 36% in the fall 2011 semester (Center for Student Success, 2011). Further, limited research has been done on

Latina/o community college executive administrators. Therefore, a need exists to investigate the career experiences of Latina/os who have risen to community college executive level administrative positions in order to learn more about how to recruit and mentor Latina/o community college faculty and staff who have similar career aspirations. They might provide future generations of Latina/o students mentors who guide them as they progress from two-year to four-year colleges and universities, and subsequently to their chosen careers.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o executive-level leadership in community college education through in-depth interviews of current California community college executive administrators. More specifically, this study explored: (a) the experiences of Latina/o California community college executive administrators as related to their career paths, education, personal and professional challenges, leadership, and their self-perceptions of the leadership expectations placed on them; (b) the understanding of community college leadership of Latina/o community college executive administrators based on their experiences; and, (c) the strategies used by Latina/o community college executive administrators in meeting the challenges and obstacles encountered during their progression from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions. The portraits developed by the researcher presented the lived experiences of the subjects as they progressed from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions and offer a blueprint to Latina/os who have similar career aspirations; and more succinctly, provide insight into how Latina/o California community college executive administrators might

mentor and support the academic and professional development of aspiring Latina/o community college leaders.

### **Research Questions**

The research in this study focused on the following questions:

1. How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?
2. How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?
3. What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced as California community college leaders?
4. What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their rise from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provided a lens for studying and understanding the phenomenon of the disproportionate numbers of Latina/os in executive administrative positions in California community colleges. CRT in academia questions the traditional educational system and its institutions to meritocracy, color and gender blindness, race and gender, and equal opportunity. CRT also provides an alternative to normative perspectives in educational research (Solórzano, 1998). CRT also helps to minimize stereotypes about ethnic groups and magnifies the underrepresentation and experiences of ethnic groups as students or as academicians.

For the purposes of this study, CRT offered the researcher tools to address the problems Latina/o students might confront related to educational inequality and

educational opportunity. More succinctly, the researcher analyzed the implementation of policies that CRT supports which might help change the perceptions and pedagogical practices that can benefit an ethnic group that has been on the fringes of education far too long. For an aspiring Latina/o community college executive administrator, relating CRT to this study assisted in understanding the obstacles and challenges that are prevalent for executive-level administrators in California community colleges. Specifically, CRT helped to better understand the perceptions, opportunities, racism, or other primary factors that might help or hinder prospective Latina/o CEOs. One of the primary tenets of CRT is the use of voice or storytelling (Ladson-Billings, 1996). In developing the portraits of the Latina/o community college executive administrators, the researcher gave voice to the subjects, helped to change the perceptions of Latina/o leaders, and introduced the reader to unique Latina/o experiences.

### **Importance of Study**

Latina/o executive administrators have distinct experiences related to leadership in community colleges. Further, many of these anecdotes have not been shared with many academicians therefore the research continues to be limited. A lack of knowledge continues to hinder the development of aspiring leaders who are currently serving in middle-level manager, faculty, and staff positions at two-year colleges. Community college personnel might benefit from learning more about the professional experiences and insight of Latina/o leaders, along with learning about the richness of their diverse cultures. Such enlightenment might promote a better understanding of Latina/os and serves to offer a model to encourage the mentorship and development of future Latina/o executive administrators.

Investigating the experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators through their respective lenses further expands the knowledge and support offered to Latina/o community college students. For those seeking careers as community college academicians, the study might allow them to understand the trajectory one goes through to reaching faculty, staff, and administrative positions. For others, this study might help them pursue four-year college and university degrees, or might help further expand their knowledge about career options that previously seemed unattainable. Gaining a deeper understanding of Latina/o community college executive administrators might contribute to the development of prospective leaders and can enrich the reader's comprehension of the obstacles, challenges, and successes that leaders have faced in their personal pathways to executive administrative positions in California community colleges.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this dissertation the following definitions were used:

*Board of Trustees:* "Elected or appointed citizens who serve as the governing board of a community college or college district" (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. xi).

*Chief Executive Officer:* "The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the head of either a single-campus college or a multi-college district. In either case, they are the district's top administrative officers, reporting directly to the board of trustees" (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. xi.).

*Chancellor:* "The CEO of a multi-college district or multi-campus district" (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. xi).

*California Community Colleges:* “The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, with 2.6 million students attending 112 colleges. With a wide range of educational offerings, the colleges provide workforce training, basic courses in English and math, certificate and degree programs and preparation for transfer to four-year institutions” (Little Hoover Commission, 2012, p. 3).

*Dean:* “The third level of administrator below the Vice President but above the program directors, supervisors, and department chairpersons. The Dean is generally the middle-level manager, but at some colleges, the dean might be the Vice President” (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. xi).

*Executive Administrator:* A community college administrator serving as a Chancellor, President, Vice Chancellor, or Vice President.

*Faculty:* “Instructors, counselors, and librarians serving on the front line of a community college’s educational mission” (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. xi).

*Hispanic:* Persons of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central American, and South American descent, or some other Spanish origin (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

*Latina/o:* Persons residing in the United States whose ancestries are from Latin American countries in the Western Hemisphere. This term is more inclusive than Hispanic. It includes people from South and Central America and who may not speak Spanish (e.g., Belize and Brazil; Hayes-Bautista and Chapa, 1987).

*Learning Community:* “Classes that are linked or clustered during an academic term, often around an interdisciplinary theme, and enroll a common cohort of students” (Boroch, 2010, p.77).

*Management or administrative employees:* “Certified and noncertified employees hired by the Board of Trustees to oversee the operation of a community college or community college district” (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. xi).

*President:* “The top person at a college or campus in a multi-college or multi-campus district who reports to the Chancellor” (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. xi).

*Persistence:* “A student’s postsecondary education continuation behavior that leads to graduation” (Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation, 1999, p. 5).

*Postsecondary Education:* Education that occurs at colleges or universities.

*Retention:* “Usually a percentage measurement showing how many students re-enrolled at an institution that they attended the previous semester or school year.” (Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation, 1999, p. 5).

*Student Success:* Implies that a student receives a final grade of C or better, or Credit (Pass) at the end of the respective course.

*Supplemental Instruction:* Supplemental Instruction (SI) was created at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1973. SI targets historically difficult courses (classes with a 30% failure or withdrawal rate) or “gatekeeper” courses (Boroch, 2010, p. 97). In the SI course, a former student that has completed the course with an A’ grade is hired as a SI Leader. The SI Leader attends all classroom lectures and conducts weekly office hours and weekly workshops, and meets with other SI Leaders. One of the main functions of the SI Leader is to help the students learn the course material in a safe and familiar context. In its simplest form, Boroch believes that the goal of SI is to integrate what to learn with how to learn.

*Vice President or Vice Chancellor--Administrative Services:* A second-level administrator found on a campus or in a district office. The Chief Financial Officer of a community college who is responsible for campus services such as the college bookstore, computer services, fiscal services, grant management, maintenance and operations, personnel services, and security/safety (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

*Vice President or Vice Chancellor--Instruction/Academic Affairs:* A second-level administrator found on a campus or in a district office. The Chief Instructional Officer of a community college is responsible for all academic and/or instructional related matters, which include academic disciplines, scheduling, Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), and curriculum (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

*Vice President or Vice Chancellor--Student Services:* A second-level administrator found on a campus or in a district. The Chief Student Services Officer of a community college is responsible for admissions and records, financial aid, Extended Opportunity Programs Services (EOPS); counseling; Special Programs and Services for the Disabled (SPSD); Associated Student Government (ASG); and, assessment (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

### **Delimitations**

The following were the delimitations for this study: (a) the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in California, (b) the study focused on community colleges, (c) the study was conducted with persons of Latina/o descent, and, (d) the study focused on executive administrators.

### **Limitations**

Diminishing the occurrence of limitations was the sole responsibility of the researcher and did not limit the validity of the study. For the purpose of exploring the



career path of Latina/o California community college executive administrators the following limitations were: (a) refusal of current Latina/o California community college executive administrators to participate in the study because they perceived that their feedback was not confidential, (b) the researcher had no control over a subjects willingness to participate and/or continue in the study, (c) the results of the study may or may not be used by prospective Latina/o California community executive leaders as a tool or guideline to help them progress through the administrative career ladder, and, (d) the researcher had no control over the responses given by the subjects to the interview questions.

### **Assumptions**

The first assumption made by the researcher was that the interview question responses by Latina/o California community college executive administrators were forthright and on a voluntary basis. The second assumption was that California community colleges are defined by a similar organizational and management structure. Lastly, it was assumed that executive-level positions in community colleges are Chancellors, Presidents, Vice Chancellors, and Vice Presidents.

### **Organization of Study**

In Chapter 1 the researcher introduced the problem, provided a succinct explanation of the purpose and significance of the study, and defined the key terms. There was also an introduction of the research questions, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the study. Further, the chapter explained the value of studying the importance of Latina/o California community college executive administrators. Lastly, Chapter 1 also introduced the concept of CRT and how this theoretical framework might provide a powerful lens in which to examine Latina/o California community college

leaders. In Chapter 2 the researcher provided a review of the literature related to: (a) how CRT might influence education and career attainment for Latina/o community college leaders; (b) a background on Latina/o demographics in the US and a contextualized overview of middle-level to executive administrative positions; (c) Latina/os and education, and how that might influence the attainment of a postsecondary education and subsequently a career in community colleges; and, (d) the methods used to overcome any obstacles Latina/os might experience as community college executive administrators. In Chapter 3 the researcher explained and defined the methodology for the study. In Chapter 4 the researcher developed the portraits of the subjects with the primary objectives of introducing the reader to the subjects and highlighting that not all roads to executive administrative positions in community colleges are the same. The respective trajectory's are distinct and gave Latina/os who aspire to similar career paths, perspectives that were enlightening and insightful. Chapter 5 analyzed the data and discussed the findings of the study results. Further, the researcher offered conclusions and provided recommendations for future policy, practice, and studies in regards to Latina/os in community college leadership positions. Lastly, any supporting data are found in the appendices section of the dissertation.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter was offered as a review of the literature that supports the need to study Latina/o executive-level administrators in California community colleges. A limited body of literature has been written on Latina/o community college leaders. As Latina/os have grown into the largest ethnic minority in the US, many seek to enroll in community colleges to complete an AA or AS Degree, or to obtain general education requirements to transfer to a four-year institution. Many Latina/o students who enter community colleges might seek out Latina/o faculty, staff, and administrators as mentors for academic or career guidance. For these students, connecting and relating with someone with shared experiences, a similar ethnic background, or culture might provide the impetus for academic success in postsecondary education (Verdugo, 2001).

The existing literature on Latina/o community college executive administrators details how many aspiring leaders perceive there is a bias towards them in hiring, promotion, and policy procedures. Some administrators feel marginalized while others experience direct acts of racism (Santiago, 1996). For some Latina/os there is a self-perception that they must be overqualified to assume leadership positions in community colleges. Conversely, there is also a perception that tokenism abounds in educational organizations, which minimizes meritocracy. The field of meritocracy assumes all individuals have an equal opportunity to succeed because there is a level playing field. Meritocracy also espouses that work ethic, values, dedication, and individual attributes, aptitude and intelligence, determine success or failure (Zamudio, Russell, Rios & Bridgeman, 2011).

The literature review was divided into five sections and explored the factors that might limit representation of Latina/os in community college executive administrative positions. Some of the key factors that affect the attainment of postsecondary education are explored as the lack of Latina/o CEOs in community colleges and minimal presence of Latina/o professionals might be directly related to the lack of Latina/os succeeding in academia. Therefore, the focus of the research looks through lenses that includes: (a) multicultural executive administration as it related to Critical Race Theory (CRT); (b) Latina/o demographics in the US and a contextual section describing California community college administrative positions; (c) what is known about Latina/o community college executive administrator experiences--career path, education, personal challenges, and their colleges--which might change their perceptions on leadership; (d) the obstacles that might hinder Latina/os from reaching executive administrative positions, K-12 to postsecondary education retention and success; and, (e) what is known about the obstacles and/or challenges faced by Latina/o leaders, and what strategies are utilized by Latina/o community college executive administrative leaders to address or overcome these obstacles and/or challenges.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Latina/os have grown into the largest ethnic group in the US and many seek to attend community colleges as a pathway to reaching a four-year college or university. The presence of Latina/o executive administrators in California community colleges is important to the development and success of Latina/o students because they might serve as mentors who provide insight into what can be expected as Latina/o students attend postsecondary education. There is currently an under-representation of Latina/o

community college executive-level administrators and this number is disproportionate to the number of Latina/o students served in California community colleges, which was 35.65% in the fall 2011 semester (Center for Student Success, 2011). Further, limited research has been done on Latina/o community college executive administrators.

Therefore, a need exists to investigate the career experiences of Latina/os who have been promoted to community college executive level administrative positions in order to learn more about how to recruit and mentor Latina/o community college faculty and staff who have similar career aspirations. They might provide future generations of Latina/o students mentors who guide them as they progress from two-year to four-year colleges and universities, and subsequently to their chosen careers.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o executive leadership in community colleges through in-depth interviews of current California community college executive administrators. More specifically, this study explored: (a) the experiences of Latina/o California community college executive administrators as related to their career paths, education, personal and professional challenges, leadership, and their self-perceptions of the leadership expectations placed on them; (b) the understanding of community college leadership of Latina/o community college executive administrators based on their experiences, and, (c) the strategies used by Latina/o community college executive administrators in meeting the challenges and obstacles encountered during their progression from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions. The portraits developed and written by the researcher presented the lived experiences of the subjects as they progressed from faculty

or staff to executive administrative positions and offer a blueprint to Latina/os who have similar career aspirations; and more succinctly, provide insight into how Latina/o California community college executive administrators might mentor and support the academic and professional development of aspiring Latina/o community college leaders.

### **Literature Search Strategies**

For the purposes of this literature review, the researcher used a variety of sources to better understand the challenges Latina/os face in succeeding as community college executive administrators and how achieving success academically at the K-12 level and in postsecondary education might affect them. The primary databases that were used to investigate the sources were Google and the Pepperdine University Library search engine. In order to access literature on this topic, the researcher entered Latina/os in education, Latina/o administrators in community colleges, or Latina/os in postsecondary or higher education executive administrative positions. From these searches, similar topics were identified that proved to be useful for the literature review. Once primary authors were identified, the researcher obtained important information from the identified source. Further, accessing the literature from the references of these sources helped to obtain additional literature for the review. As a result, primary sources and authors began to appear frequently as it related to the research topic.

Similar to the searches done on Latina/os in community college executive administrative positions, the majority of the searches done for the theoretical literature were conducted on Google and the Pepperdine University Library database. The main term used for the theoretical search was Critical Race Theory, which resulted in similar

journals, authors, and books written about CRT. Therefore, the researcher was able to organize literature as it related to the selected dissertation topic.

### **Literature Review Highlights**

The literature review delved into the key themes that influence Latina/os in education and California community college executive administrative positions. First, multicultural executive administrative positions as they related to CRT were analyzed to demonstrate how Latina/o California community college CEOs might be affected. Second, contextual and historical reviews of community college executive administrative positions were explored, along with how demographics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has influenced and affected postsecondary attendance for Latina/os. Third, Latina/o community college executive administrative experiences--career path, education, personal challenges, and their colleges—were explored, which might have influenced their perceptions on leadership. Fourth, the researcher explored factors affecting Latina/o educational attainment in K-12 and postsecondary education. For the aspiring faculty member and administrator this is a key component of why Latina/os might not be selected for these coveted positions--because students are not succeeding in K-12 education--and when they do, many do not make it past their first year of two-or four-year colleges. Lastly, the researcher explored the obstacles and/or challenges faced by Latina/o CEOs, and what strategies they utilized to overcome these obstacles and/or challenges.

### **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

Frustrated with an under-theorized utilization of race in educational scholarship, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) specifically called for a new movement in education rooted in CRT. Zamudio et al. (2011) assert that Ladson-Billings “was discouraged with

the educational literature that presented race as either merely an ideological construct or an objective condition” (p. 7). For CRT, race is not just an additional variable in the equation; instead it focuses its research on enterprise. CRT comprises of four premises: CRT espouses that persons of all races experience race in different ways and in varying degrees. The manner in which ethnic groups perceive race is different for each racial group. Second, CRT theorizes that the vestiges of past racial experiences instantly place minority groups at a different level of experiences than that of the Anglo racial experience. Third, CRT provides valuable insight into how race operates and critiques standards that appear neutral, but which systemically subordinates racial minorities. Lastly, CRT details the reasons that maintain racial minorities’ inferiority in American culture that have become the accepted norms of inequity (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Pellar & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**CRT promotes a voice.** What makes CRT so powerful is that it focuses on the role of voice to bring power to racial justice. People of color speak with knowledge that is experiential and that society is structured by ingrained racism. Further, this structure gives minority groups a framework that warrants using the term voice (Delgado, 1989). Use of voice is one way that CRT links form and substance in scholarship. By acknowledging how one came to being oppressed, one can learn to overcome the internal conflict many maintain as a result of negative self-image. Therefore, naming one’s reality with stories can affect the oppressor. The dominant group in society will justify its power with tales that construct reality in ways that maintain their oppressor. CRT provides a way for an ethnic group that has experienced marginalization or oppression to



begin exercising its voice, and thus for this dissertation the voice of the subjects provided a powerful source of inspiration.

**CRT and storytelling.** Another way CRT is so eloquently conveyed is by the frequent use of the first person or storytelling (Williams, 1991). Despite the momentum of multiculturalism, the history of racial oppression as well as general information about Latina/os continues to be treated with little regard to historical accuracy. Not only does this paint a false picture, but perpetuates the limited knowledge other ethnic groups might have about Latina/os. CRTs commitment to radical emancipation by the law is a source of strength because of theorists' ability to use it in ways that are creative rather than paralyzing (Harris, 1990).

Because the Latina/o voice about self comes from a deracialized perspective, narratives and anecdotes function to improve the quality that CRT scholarship has on the Latina/o experience. The power of the narrative to build bridges of acceptance, empathy, and comprehension is the beauty of what makes narrative voice such a powerful tool that magnifies intellect (Lawrence, 1995). Latina/os might be able to embrace their own history when they can recount and highlight their experiences. This in turn might help them to develop and pave the way to a future that previously might have seemed unattainable.

**CRT theorists.** CRT is a movement within academia that fervently makes race its primary focus. CRT theorists fully explore how race functions in the context of racial attitudes. Taylor (2009) asserts that following remarkable advances of the 1950s and 1960s to dismantle discrimination and segregation, the 1970s saw a backlash to the perceived changes brought by the civil rights movement:

Out of this frustration a group of scholars, mostly in the legal field, began to openly criticize the role of law in the construction and maintenance of racially based social and economic oppression. It is this social and economic oppression that led to a group of educators to begin the study of CRT. These scholars included: Derrick A. Bell, Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier and Kimberle Crenshaw. (p. 2)

Bell, who is viewed as the founding father of CRT, is the first African American to be tenured at Harvard's School of Law. Most of Bell's innovative work established a scholarly agenda that placed race, racism, and colonialism squarely at the center of intellectual legal dialogue. Along with Bell, Delgado, Lawrence, Guinier and Crenshaw, other CRT theorists such as Mari Matsuda, Patricia Williams and David Trubek organized the first CRT workshop in 1989. It is at this workshop that the theory received its name and which the theorists agreed upon a program for future scholarship, built a collective identity and began to establish a body of academic work. Pioneering CRT theorists believe that color, white or black, were not meant to signal individuality or group identity, but rather an ideology and political structure with roots planted in a premise of White Eurocentric supremacy with an impact on global colonialism.

**CRT and leadership.** With the growing number of Latina/o students in community colleges, the need to diversify in the executive administrative ranks by ethnicity and gender are critical to student success that promotes an ideal for equity and social justice. Part of the role of K-12 and postsecondary education is to prepare students to compete in a system of winners and losers that is strongly correlated with the standards of racial-ethnic, social class, and gender hierarchy (McQuillan, 1998; Olivas, 1997).

CRT studies support the perception that it will be very difficult to encourage a generation of Latina/o students to aspire to postsecondary education, let alone the pursuit of a career in academia, when their stories and experiences are not brought to the

forefront of their educational experiences. The lens of CRT is critical in analyzing and interpreting the school experiences of Latina/os in ways that magnify family, education, culture, and language as strengths, while being critical of the public school system because of their disenfranchisement of students and their families.

A key component for educational success is for Latina/o students to develop positive identities in the academic setting. Traditionally, their self-perception has not been very positive because of stereotypes. Recent ethnographic studies of Latina/o family, education, and economic status are filled with stories of low expectations from teachers and below average instructional content. Some students are placed in special education or vocational tracks because of language difficulties and there is a curriculum void of culture, traditions, and the rich history of Latina/o students (Vellenas & Dehyle, 1999).

With obstacles such as these, it is no wonder that the standards and expectations for Latina/o students to complete a K-12 education are tainted from an early age. The use of CRT to explore these deficiencies and make clear how Latina/o students become recipients of the fury of an anti-immigrant, anti-Latina/o, and xenophobic rhetoric that encroaches perceptions of our country and nullifies any gains made for civil and human rights (Ladson-Billings, 1996).

**CRT and latina/os.** Being a Latina/o student in a community college classroom often means being one of four students who will not transition to a four-year college or university. For a Latina/o in a four-year college or university, it often means being the only person of color in a classroom. The added pressures of having to perform academically or being the lone role model to a generation of family members who did not

reach postsecondary education could be a burden that might leave one with feelings of isolation. Latina/os also deal with the challenges of having to represent their ethnic group and race. Right or wrong, CRT theorists believe that this burden does not seem to be placed on non-Latina/os. Zamudio et al. (2011) conclude:

Students of color have to deal with an expectation that they represent their race, an expectation not placed upon White students. A benefit of Whiteness is that it allows a person to take a position as an individual rather than as a member of a group wherein one Latina/o person represents all Latina/o people. (p. 77)

For Latina/os who struggle to attain executive administrative positions in community colleges, there are challenges of racism that must be overcome that are ingrained in the culture of institutions and cannot be remedied through organizational policies. For Latina/os aspiring to executive administrative positions in California community colleges, stereotypes that are created about them are often reinforced by the beliefs of faculty and administrators who are not Latina/o. Community colleges that typecast Latina/os as only being able to serve in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Student Services or Administrative Services positions might not know that Latina/os in pursuit of Academic Affairs/Instruction Department administrative positions have to prove themselves to a far greater degree and must possess chameleon-like qualities in order to survive a political climate that magnifies their existence in middle- to executive-level administrative positions. Some Latina/o leaders might isolate themselves from peers or blend into the status quo so do not call attention to themselves or fuel negative stereotypes that have exacerbated the discrimination and stereotypes that some have faced as faculty or administrators.

Success in the US is often times associated with obtaining a college or university degree. This is particularly true if success is measured in financial terms. Thus for

Latina/os, receiving a degree is critical to achieving lifetime opportunities that might not have been available without a postsecondary education. For Latina/os who do reach this goal and pursue careers as community college faculty members and ultimately administrators, their positions are instrumental in reaching out to a generation of Latina/o students who seek to better their lives through postsecondary education.

### **Latina/o Demographics**

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw a tremendous increase in the number of Latina/os living in the US. Under the purview of the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Latina/os are identified as Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican, Central or South American, or of other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (United States Census Bureau, 2010). More than half of the growth in US population during the first decade of the 21st century was due to the increase in the Latina/o population. During that 10 year period the population increased by 15 million, accounting for over half of the 27 million increase in the total population of the US. Over half of the Latina/o population in the US resides in just four states: California, Florida, New York and Texas, with the majority of the population being of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban descent. Most Latina/os living in California and Texas are of Mexican descent while those living in New York and Florida are of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent.

Even though the Latina/o population grew significantly, a large majority are still faced with fighting cycles of poverty, racial and gender discrimination, or are targeted for their failure to acquire their adopted language. One important benchmark or equalizer for the Latina/o population is to obtain a postsecondary degree. A formal education will not

only enrich one's perspective, but might change the path or reverse the cycle of hardship for a generation of families for years to come. A postsecondary degree might also affect how one perceives the world, how one is perceived, and how one interacts with those around him or her. Ultimately, expectations for self and family might forever be changed. The challenge in realizing this benchmark is very difficult for most children or youths because they do not have proper mentors to turn to for guidance. Many have come from households where parents have a primary school education or where high school dropouts are the norm. Those who do make it to higher education might not have a support group for social and academic collaboration that nurtures a learning community of success.

For many Latina/os, a postsecondary degree is a critical component to helping them reach their academic or career goals. It is likely that many Latina/os might be enticed to attend community colleges as a way to transition to four-year institutions. For community colleges, completion rates are a measure of an institution's success. Therefore, this might lead to a shift in best practices that supports and highlights retention and completion rates. One retention method to attract Latina/o students might be to employ Latina/o community college faculty and administrators who can take on key executive administrative leadership roles.

Very little has been researched or published regarding the progress of Latina/os in becoming CEOs at two-year colleges (Haro & Lara, 2003). Latina/os who do make it to executive-level administrative positions at community colleges are mostly held to higher standards. With more Latina/o students enrolling in community colleges, US

postsecondary institutions will require more leadership opportunities to develop future leaders (Leon & Nevarez, 2007).

### **Community College Administration**

To better understand how Latina/os might assume community college executive administrative positions, the following section describes how aspiring executive administrators might progress to executive administrative positions. A traditional pathway to executive administrative positions in community colleges goes as follows: Faculty to Dean of Instruction or Dean of Student Services, to Vice President or Vice Chancellor of Instruction, Student Services, or Administrative Services, to President, and finally Chancellor (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Vaughn, 1986). For this dissertation, the researcher included Director and Coordinator as entry-level positions done at the faculty level that lead to middle-level administrative positions.

**Director or coordinator.** A Program Director or Coordinator's main focus is to ensure their respective programs within a community college are operating efficiently. Program Directors and Coordinators are faculty members or classified managers who might oversee the tutoring center, the reading laboratory, admissions and records, business services, or the internship office on campus. A Program Director or Coordinator from academic affairs/instruction might teach several classes while simultaneously coordinating their department. They might be released one hundred percent from their teaching duties and are generally supervised by a Dean within that discipline. In contrast, a Business Director usually reports to a Vice President of Business/Administrative Services and supervises a staff of classified employees (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

**Dean.** Most Deans were previously Coordinators, Department Chairpersons, or Academic Senate Presidents, serving in these roles for at least a combined five years, and are also considered middle-level administrators (Jensen & Giles, 2006). A Dean might manage several disciplines or departments within a small community college. At a large institution, Deans usually manage one discipline where they were previously faculty members. If the position is in student services they may have started off as admissions and records Directors or Counselors. Cohen and Brawer (2008) describe Deans as managers responsible for planning and supervising instructional, student services, vocational and community services programs (as cited in Colvin, 2011).

**Vice president.** As Vice President, one manages several programs within the division umbrella: student services, academic affairs/instruction, or administrative/business services. Vice Presidents also oversee faculty, staff, Directors, and Deans within those respective divisions. The Vice President is considered an executive administrator who reports to the college president (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

**President.** A college President is the highest-profile position in a community college. Cohen and March (2008, 1974) identified a career trajectory to the community college CEO position consisting of five levels: (a) faculty member, (b) unit or department chair, (c) Dean, (d) Vice President for Academic Affairs, and, (e) President (as cited in Colvin, 2011). A community college presidential interview usually has the following key college constituency groups on the interview panel: faculty, classified staff, and administration. A second- or third-tier interview is generally attended by key leaders in those respective constituency groups and includes the Chancellor and Board of Trustees. A community college President is an extremely unique position that requires versatility,



flexibility, and possessing effective interpersonal skills. A community college President must be adept at wearing various hats and willing to endure much of the ceremonial protocol that goes along with the position. According to Jensen and Giles (2006):

A community college president must be a business manager, fundraiser, chief policy maven, keeper of the academic flame, hand-holder, backslapper, art and athletic devotee, childcare and technology advocate, a pretty good public speaker, and even better vote counter. The job is complex, fragmented, time consuming, and physically and emotionally demanding. It is also the best job in the world if you get a kick out of helping an institution do a better job of educating students and serving the community. (p. 8)

There is much turnover in college President positions and they must be open to transition to other colleges within five years. Community college Presidents must be willing to face criticism and backstabbing, deal with severe budgetary crisis, and work with Chancellors or Board of Trustees that undermine their decisions. Therefore, the job of President is not a prospective job for all middle-level managers or Vice Presidents. Ultimately, those who do persevere are willing to endure the successes and failures that might come with position (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

**Chancellor.** Chancellors are generally divided into those who work at a single college campus or those who supervise several Presidents in a multi-college district. Those who work in a single college district perform many of the tasks of a college President and report to the Board of Trustees. For the most part, Chancellor's supervise Vice Chancellors serving in similar roles to those of Vice Presidents. In a community college district where there are multiple colleges, the Chancellor supervises various campus Presidents. A Chancellor is appointed by the Board of Trustees and is given an employment contract that can range from two to five years. Like college Presidents, Chancellors must wear many hats, must answer to volatile and/or supportive boards, and

must ensure they are unbiased, especially if they serve multiple colleges within a district (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

**Future outlook.** Community colleges will have many retirements in the next 5 years. Therefore, the need to develop Latina/o community college executive administrators is important, considering the large Latina/o population California community colleges serve and the under-representation of Latina/os in these positions. With challenges to improve persistence and graduates rates, combined with limited budgets, there might be a valuable opportunity to recruit energetic and dynamic leaders who could meet these challenges with visionary thinking and strong leadership.

### **Latina/o Executive Administrative Experiences and Perceptions**

One of the main premises of this dissertation was to learn about the career and educational pathways, and personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college CEOs, and how these experiences might have contributed to their understanding of community college leadership. Minimal research exists regarding the career paths of Latina/o community college executive administrators in the past 20 years, specifically for Presidents and Chancellors (De los Santos & Vega, 2008). Much of the lobbying for a larger presence of Latina/os in postsecondary administrative and faculty positions came in the 1960s, when there was much civil unrest and social activism in the US.

**Education.** Similar to Native Americans, African Americans, and Asians before them, Latina/os have been the victims of racial prejudice and segregation. Taking their lead from charismatic figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert F. Kennedy, and Cesar Chavez, more Latina/o leaders and community activists expressed a voice for Latina/os to pursue postsecondary education. At the beginning of the 1960s, there was an

increase by colleges to hire Latina/o faculty members who could mentor students on their campuses. Many believed that by hiring Latina/o faculty they could also be recruited and groomed as future administrators at two-and four-year colleges. The fact that few Latina/os held advanced degrees put a focus on movements and organizations to be a voice for Latina/o rights on college campuses and that promoted the attainment of postsecondary education degrees. Muñoz (1989) asserts:

Fewer than one hundred scholars of Mexican descent held doctorates in the United States in the 1960s. Of these, most held Education Doctorates (Ed.D.), which located them in a distinctly different research network with a very different emphasis from those scholars holding a Doctor of Philosophy. (p. 142)

Approximately thirty years later there were 950 Latina/o doctoral recipients, and of those, 462 were women and 209 were Ed.D.'s (American Association of University Women, 2001).

**Career paths.** Another reason that Latina/os may not reach executive administrative positions is that a large number have not been in faculty positions. According to Cohen and March's (1974) study, the traditional track for executive administrative positions is to begin as a faculty member, then work ones way up the administrative ladder. However, research indicates that there might not be enough Latina/os ready to assume executive administrative positions (Gutiérrez, Castañeda, & Katsinas, 2002). Many Latina/os do not pursue community college positions or do not earn doctorates at a rate comparable to their peers of other ethnic groups. Considering the low numbers, it may be unrealistic for more Latina/os to become CEOs in community colleges.

## **Latina/o Representation and Experiences**

In Leon's (2003) powerful analysis of Latina/os in higher education, the author offers that minorities cannot become administrative leaders unless they understand the power structure within an organization. Latina/os perceive power to be earned whereas Anglos perceive power as a precursor for a promotion. To see a better representation of Latina/os in postsecondary education a greater effort must be done by various forces involved in the development of executive administrators. Gonzalez (2007) discussed four primary factors to aid in this goal--she coined it Building Sustainable Power. The four premises included: (a) academic institutions must develop a master plan for diversity in administration, establishing specific targets for various ethnic groups; (b) the Latina/o community must establish ties with community colleges to ensure a sustainable plan to encourage and promote leaders; (c) aspiring administrators from the faculty and classified ranks must keep in touch with the Latina/o community and look to work in community colleges where they can be of service to Latina/o constituency groups on campus and in the community; and, (d) Latina/o administrators should be ready to be on the move, especially if they are to be successful and make important contributions. Combined, these four key areas might allow Latina/os to understand that work alone is not enough to have them promoted, but that establishing power within an organization is a prerequisite to being perceived as competent.

There is a perspective that Latina/o administrative leaders are overlooked or displaced soon after a brief time of service, particularly in executive administrative roles. Unfortunately this is the case for both Latina/os who are viewed as not being able to fulfill their job duties as well as those who are performing at a high level. Latina/os who

practice leadership, take action, and engage college constituents to work toward inclusiveness and ultimately a fair democratic campus are still being labeled as underqualified (Valverde, 2003). While research studies about Latina/os in executive administrative positions have grown, community colleges have not addressed issues such as multiculturalism in order to meet the needs of diverse student populations. The relatively small number of Latina/o faculty, middle-level administrators, and executive administrators must be a catalyst to initiate the dialogue that addresses this matter. It is imperative to develop strategies to improve the Latina/o educational and administrative pipeline to accomplish their objectives.

### **Latina/o Educational Obstacles and Challenges**

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2005), community colleges face an extraordinary change in leadership within the next three to 5 years. As many of the Affirmative Action and baby-boomer era community college faculty and administrators retire, there might be the potential for more candidates of ethnic backgrounds to assume to leadership positions. Unfortunately, there might not be a sufficient number of Latina/os prepared to apply for these positions since five percent of the full time community college faculty members are Latina/o (AACC, 2009). Therefore, one can deduce that if the majority of the community college President's come from the faculty ranks and Latina/os comprise of only 5% of the faculty, there will not be a large pool of candidates rising to executive administrative positions.

To better understand the career path--education, personal and professional--of Latina/o community college executive administrators, it was essential to delve deeper into the educational attainment of Latina/o students. Latina/o students are not succeeding

in K-12 education, and those who do make it to postsecondary education are finding it difficult to succeed in community colleges. These factors affect the attainment of administrative executive positions because the pool of potential candidates diminishes every time a student drops out of high school or when a community college student struggles to attain competency in basic skills reading, writing, and mathematics courses, which also contributes to not completing their formal studies. Several of these characteristics were explored in order to depict a more accurate picture of the factors that might affect the future presence of Latina/o CEOs in community colleges.

**Latina/o educational attainment.** The literature indicates that secondary education and college completion rates do not mirror the high Latina/o population in the US. Only 20% of Latina/o community college students complete an AA or AS degree, or transfer to a four-year college or university after 6 years; only 16% of Latina/o students who graduated from high school in 2009 met the requirements for admission into the California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) systems; and only 7% of California Latina/os ages 25 and older held a college degree in 2009 (Puente, 2012). Not only are these rates dismally low but they also inspire a sense of urgency to change how Latina/os perceive the value of a postsecondary education.

If more Latina/o faculty, staff, and administrators had a presence in community colleges, Latina/o students might be encouraged to shift their mindset to attend college and complete their degrees, regardless of their obstacles. At a young age, it is important to teach Latina/o students at a young age to believe that a postsecondary education will help change the course of their future for generations to come. Latina/o youth sometimes fail to recognize that potential for intellectual development is a key human attribute and

that we should strive to develop innate capacities to the maximum (Martinez & Aguirre, 2003). Unfortunately, many Latina/os turn their attention and energies to anti-social behavior such as gang affiliation or drug use. As a result, Latina/os end up as the minority group with the highest dropout rate in secondary education. For example, 55% of Latina/o students who started the 9<sup>th</sup> grade earned a high school diploma in 1999 (Kaufman, Kwon, Klein, & Chapmane, 2000). To improve these rates there is a need for better retention strategies to improve the graduation figures in secondary education.

ACE (2005) published a report on race, ethnicity and gender of students in postsecondary education. Some of the results highlighted the status of Latina/os nationally, which included: 13% of undergraduate students are Latina/o; 59% of undergraduates are female; 39% of undergraduates are aged 25 or older; and 46% of Latina/o undergraduates attend community colleges. The latter figure is particularly important because it is critical to assist community college students succeed at two-year colleges in order for them to transition to four-year colleges and universities. In California, where the Latina/o population in 2010 was 14,013,719 or 37.6% (United States Census Bureau, 2010) of the population, the need is even more significant to the academic success for current and future generations of community college students. In the fall 2011 semester, 346,170 of the 1,651,177 or 35.65% of California community college students were Latina/o (Center for Student Success, 2011). Of those Latina/o students who did complete an AA or AS degree, or transfer to a college or university after 6 years, the number is 20% compared to 37% of Caucasians.

Promising practices are more closely being examined in order to increase activities that promote persistence, retention and completion in community colleges. In

spite of the high numbers of Latina/os in two-year institutions, completion rates continue to be low (Astin & Oseguera, 2004). The 2010 census indicates that Latina/os are a large percentage of the population with rich diversity. To an outsider looking in, Latina/os are a homogenous group of the population who speak Spanish as their first language and has similar customs and traditions. However, Latina/os are a heterogeneous group with distinctive immigration statuses; some do not speak Spanish; some speak distinct dialects of Spanish; and most vary in the time that they immigrated to the United States; and, they are dispersed throughout different regions of the US. With so much diversity within the culture, it is imperative to look at the challenges Latina/o community college executive administrators and students in the US might face, especially to better understand how history has affected postsecondary success, careers, or opportunities.

Because Latina/os are the fastest growing ethnic group in community colleges, it behooves educators to consider Latina/os with more interest for the betterment of the US workforce. Postsecondary institutions that produce successful results in Latina/o graduation rates are an important benchmark for assessing the economic and workforce contributions of Latina/o graduates (Santiago, 2006). Some of the reasons that might influence Latina/os to not persist in the educational system are important to consider, especially if more Latina/o community college executive administrators are identified in relation to the amount of students served. The literature highlights two important factors that might influence why Latina/os may or may not reach postsecondary education, which might then affect the number of faculty, staff, and administrators in community colleges. These factors include: (a) how effectively Latina/o students are served in K-12



education; and, (b) of those who do reach postsecondary education, how they are retained.

**Latina/os and k-12 education.** Latina/o students are concentrated among the most neglected and poorly funded schools in America (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs; 2005). As a result, there is an unequal distribution of fiscal support, quality instruction, competent administration, and campus services that support the success of Latina/o students in K-12 education. One of the primary reasons for this gap in academic success is that Latina/o children are not exposed to pre-kinder schooling, which makes them less prepared when they enter K-12 education (Santiago, 2006).

Latino males are also finding it difficult to make progress in their formal education compared to their Latina peers. Latino males, ages 9 to 13, have higher rates of being retained one or two grades in primary and middle schools (Shaffer & Gordon, 2006). Cultural labels, which place an emphasis on males demonstrating physical prowess and no emotion, act as a mask to counter feelings of failure and shame some boys might feel for their academic deficiencies. Among males of all ethnicities, not just Latina/os, a male code of honor and pride shapes the development of boys at an early age, a code that includes the set of behaviors and rules of conduct including strength, toughness, and independence, all ingrained into boys by our society (Pollack, 1998). To infer that social stereotypes or institutional inequalities are the main reasons why Latina/os experience a low rate of educational attainment as they progress to secondary school would not bring to light some factors that might influence success. High dropout rates among Latina/os are influenced by numerous characteristics that include immigrant

status and English language acquisition, SES, or the quality of education in predominantly Latina/o schools.

A large number of Latina/o students are immigrants who came to the US during their childhood or adolescence, and those who were born in the US learned to speak English as a second language. For immigrants who come to the US without a high school education, they are more likely to dropout than Latina/o youth born in the US (Kaufman et al., 2000). This is particularly true if they financially support their families in their native and adoptive countries. For students who are English language learners, acquiring adequate language skills to perform basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are also factors affecting their secondary school success. According to a report by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year (Barth, Haycock, Huang, & Richardson, 2000), by their senior year, Latina/o students have math and reading skills that are comparable to those of Caucasian 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Further, English language learners might not receive proper instruction to attain English fluency because teachers might not have the proper experience or knowledge to support academic success.

Academic success for Latina/o students might also be influenced by the prevalence of SES. Students who come from low SES backgrounds are more likely to live in communities with inadequate social services, deplorable housing conditions and living arrangements, and public schools that are overcrowded and underfunded (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). It is no wonder why low SES students fail to measure up to peers who live in middle to upper class neighborhoods and whose schools have the economic sources to support academic excellence. Students who are in high-poverty schools have shown very little academic progress in terms of achievement on national tests (Riley,

2001). Therefore, schools in neighborhoods with a low SES struggle to provide a quality education, which can be another factor that contributes to academic success for Latina/o students.

The quality of education in Latina/o schools is another factor that might influence persistence in the academic setting. Schools where students report a higher quality of teachers have a lower dropout rate than schools where students report just an average quality of teachers (Rumberger & Thomas, 2000). Secondary schools that have a predominantly under-qualified faculty are more likely to teach the general education subjects of English, math and science without the adequate qualifications to do so. Approximately 50% of all the teachers in schools with 90% or greater minority enrollment possess the qualifications to teach those subject matters compared to the 86% of teachers with over 90% of students considered Caucasian (Barth et al., 2000).

In 2009, the high school dropout rate for Latina/os was 19%, which was almost double and triple the rate respectively of African American and Caucasian students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Statistics such as these overshadow the success stories of Latina/os who make it to postsecondary education. Strategies to improve Latina/o attendance at two- and four-year institutions in postsecondary education have been successful as many educators and colleges are committed to more Latina/os obtaining a college education. Some of the best practices that have aided in getting Latina/os to postsecondary education include community and outreach programs that offer information and access to colleges and universities by promoting positive transitions to higher education. Further, programs on college campuses, such as Learning

Communities (LCs), help to foster collaboration, retention, and support services that are helpful to student success.

To improve the dropout rates of K-12 students and ensure that Latina/os progress to postsecondary education there is an increased need for programs that support persistence and retention. Aggressively confronting the low expectations placed on Latina/o students might promote changes that improve the educational pipeline from K-12 to postsecondary education. School districts that have been successful in increasing the academic success of Latina/o students and establishing distinguished program development might help to facilitate college pathways.

The literature reveals that early intervention or outreach programs are more effective than basic skills programs because they provide K-12 students the opportunity to receive an early glimpse of the college experience, programs, and resources that will assist them as they step onto a college campus. Romo and Salas (2003) assert that:

Among the most successful early intervention programs are school-college collaborations. Effective intervention programs require coordination between local school districts and college and university systems, particularly with regard to admission standards, to facilitate a seamless transition from one level of education to the other. (p. 115)

Programs such as Upward Bound and Puente (*Bridge*) are effective programs that provide a wealth of knowledge to Latina/o parents who simply do not know the US educational system, even though they advocate to their children a need for an education. Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, and Garnier (2001) found that families benefit from clear information about how to interpret school communication, courses to take in high school, and what grants or scholarships are available to them. Further, K-12 educators and outreach workers in schools with Latina/os should actively pursue partnerships and

collaborate with colleges and universities to provide parents and students' consistent information regarding postsecondary education.

**Latina/os and postsecondary education.** To better understand the challenges faced by Latina/o CEOs and explain why there is a lack of representation of leadership in the community colleges, it might help to explore what the literature says about Latina/os in postsecondary education. Leon (2003) suggests that, "The future for Latina/o CEOs in postsecondary education does not look bright, given the low Latina/o graduation rates" (p. 14). For Latina/os who do reach postsecondary education, it is critical to find ways to maintain high levels of retention. The literature has indicated that several factors influence retention and promote student success of Latina/o students in community colleges. These include: (a) programs that provide academic and social support and, (b) a presence of Latina/o faculty, staff, and administrators who might be positive influences to groups of students seeking mentors.

Opportunities are vast for Latina/o students to receive assistance at postsecondary institutions. These activities include workshops, organizations and cluster groups that meet at certain times throughout the semester to provide mediated support. One such program that has experienced success is LCs that allows groups of students, either by ethnicity, academic levels, or majors, to enroll in a cohort of four to five courses per semester as they progress in their academic course of study. ACE (2005) describes various benefits for students enrolled in LCs. First, students in LCs tend to develop meaningful peer groups. Second, students in LCs tend to spend more time together studying and forming bonds with their peers. Third, students in LCs might become more involved in learning activities and persist more than peers not enrolled in LCs.

Lastly, students in LCs might employ better learning strategies as a result of being grouped together with their classmates. All of these factors are very valuable for Latina/o students because there is a shared value in learning together, especially for first generation college students. Community college students believe that LCs have a positive impact on their education and future success and completion rates (Boroch, 2010). LCs have a tendency to generate enormous support and there is evidence they are more effective than conventional approaches in enhancing student persistence, retention, and success rates (Grubb, 2001).

A large majority of Latina/o students come from households where family support and community connections carry a significant influence. Social and emotional factors also contribute to the success of students as similar experiences, culture, and traditions provide an important means of support for students. Explicit attention to the social and emotional foundations of effective small-group interaction serves to increase student's social integration into the college community and promotes student retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The degree of familial support significantly affects the college experience of first generation Latina/o students and the impetus for motivation and success is affected by the positive support given by the parents, guardians, and family members (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Gandara, 1995; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000;). Support programs such as LCs ultimately help students with similar experiences to be partnered together in classes while receiving the valuable support of college services. These services might then provide the motivation for a renewed attitude towards academics and a belief that success is attainable. Further, maintaining familial

relationships and support is critical to Latina/o students making a successful transition to postsecondary education.

When community colleges employ Latina/o faculty, staff, and administrators, it shows a commitment to Latina/o students. In postsecondary institutions, diversity and multiple perspectives enrich the experiences of Latina/o students. However, academicians, faculty or administrators, can provide successful models for Latina/o students and might prove to be the catalyst for their personal, intellectual, and career achievement. Latina/o students who are first in their families to attend postsecondary education and are from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds thrive in academic environments where Latina/o faculty and administrators are responsive to their needs and express confidence that they will succeed and fulfill their academic potential (Rendon, 2006). This support might assist students with the social and academic structure needed that often times is available only to students from privileged families and where education is the norm.

The relationships between Latina/o faculty and administrators from similar backgrounds or with similar cultural experiences might also help students succeed in the academic setting. Professors are an integral part of the college life of any postsecondary institution. Those who are active participants in student life and scholarly activities contribute to the positive personal development and enrichment, and academic success of Latina/o students. The presence of Latina/o faculty and administration might send a message to Latina/o students that they are the bridge to a brighter future and that their decision to pursue a postsecondary education is validated by them holding a position of authority and prestige in their new environment. Further, successful Latina/o educators

might be a powerful image for this generation of community college students by giving their time and expertise. Conversely students might be able to visualize a future filled with success and accomplishment as a result of this professional and personal connection.

### **Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Obstacles**

The literature highlights a variety of strategies that Latina/o community college CEOs have utilized to address and overcome challenges or obstacles they have endured as they progressed in their respective careers. These key areas are also attributed to promoting the development, retention, and success of future executive administrators. These include: (a) mentorship and leadership development programs that provide support and inculcate qualities of effective leadership for potential community college CEOs; and, (b) becoming adept at working and flourishing in an environment that is predominantly dominated by a Caucasian faculty, yet where the student population is overwhelmingly Latina/o.

Mentorship and leadership programs are vital to the development of Latina/o CEOs in community colleges. They give aspiring administrators a variety of invaluable experiences at differing levels that highlight how to prepare for executive administrative positions. Some of the highlights of these mentorship and leadership programs include job interviewing techniques, staff relations, budgetary training, and most important, they help to forge important relationships that are key to collaboration and networking. Similar to faculty or staff who provide mentorship for Latina/o students that are from low SES backgrounds or first generation students, Latina/os in entry-or middle-level administrative assignments might benefit from the assistance of seasoned administrators in executive administrative positions. Most community colleges do not actively recruit



minority candidates for management positions, lack professional development for faculty and staff, and do not support peer groups for personal and professional enrichment (Gutierrez et al., 2002).

### **Professional and Leadership Development**

There is not one single strategy that helps aspiring Latina/o community college CEOs, but mentors and leadership institutes might help to expose entry- and middle-level administrators with an overview of what to expect as challenges or difficulties arise as executive administrators. Some of the major organizations and institutes that support professional growth include: The American Council on Education (ACE) ACE Fellows Program (AFP); Harvard Institutes for Higher Education (HIHE); Higher Education Resource Services (HERS); Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA); Community College League of California (CCLC); American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC); and, National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC).

**American Council of Education – ACE Fellows Program (ACE-AFP).** The AFP helps future leaders in postsecondary education to take on real-world challenges. Some of the highlights of the AFP include: Observe and participate in key meetings and events, participate in multi-day seminars, engage in team-based cases studies, develop a network of higher education leaders across the US and abroad, and observe and participate in key meetings and events under the mentorship of experienced administrators (ACE, 2012). A highlight of the AFP is that it enables participants and future leaders to immerse themselves in the culture, policies, and decision-making

processes of another institution. Ultimately, on-the-job experience and leadership skills development are key characteristics that aspiring administrators or CEOs can acquire.

**Harvard Institutes for Higher Education (HIHE).** HIHE is for seasoned administrators who have been employed in leadership positions between 5 and 12 years. Most of the attendees are serving as Deans, Vice Presidents, and Provosts of their respective colleges or postsecondary institutions. HIHE helps aspiring CEOs determine how well positioned one is to meet current and future challenges within your organization. Participants learn to understand what aspects of their institutional mission and culture are critical to future success and how to close the gap between best intentions and what one can accomplish. Lastly, aspiring CEOs are able to reflect on leadership strengths and weaknesses with Harvard University faculty and colleagues from the US and countries throughout the world. The primary tenets of HIHE include: mastering new approaches to leadership; developing and implementing effective leadership strategies; evaluating the impact of new initiatives and alliances; realigning faculty and financial resources; and understanding and overcoming the challenges of organizational change (HIHE, n.d.).

**Higher Education Resource Services (HERS).** HERS is an educational non-profit providing leadership and management development for women in higher education administration. HERS Institutes provide an intensive 12-day curriculum that prepares women faculty and administrators for institutional leadership roles. HERS Institute participants generally hold middle- to senior-level positions and bring expertise from many academic disciplines and organizational specialties. They also represent a range of ethnic and national groups, ages, and years of experience in higher education and other

related fields. HERS Institutes focus on knowledge, skills, and perspectives for achieving institutional priorities and maximizing institutional resources. HERS Institute participants work with HERS Faculty and HERS Alumnae to articulate the professional development plans and networks needed for advancing as leaders in higher education administration. The primary focus of HERS is for aspiring administrators to: understand the higher education environment; planning and leading change in the academy; managing and investing strategic resources; engaging individual and institutional diversity; and, mapping leadership development (HERS, n.d.).

**Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA).**

ACCCA is a member-supported professional organization for administrators and managers of California's community college system. ACCCA provides professional development opportunities, advocacy, peer counseling, and assistance to all full-time administrator members, associate members, affiliates, and corporate members. ACCCA continually seeks to provide its members with services, benefits, products and programs that enhance their professional lives. ACCCA also supports leaders through professional development and networking opportunities. Some of these include: an annual conference; budget workshops; mentor programs; Administration 101 and 201 courses; and, a job search link called JobTrac (ACCCA, n.d.). Combined, these services offer current and aspiring CEOs with a wealth of information and services for professional development and learning.

**Community College League of California (CCLC).** The CCLC is a nonprofit public benefit corporation whose voluntary membership consists of the 72 local community college districts in California. Within the CCLC are two major organizations

that share a common mission, staff, and fiscal resources: the California Community College Trustees (CCCT) and the Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges (CEOCCC). The CCLC provides leadership in the education and development of community college governing board members, CEOs, and staff to ensure the continued strength, diversity, vitality and effectiveness of the college's educational programs and services. CCLC hosts state and national events that aspiring CEOs can attend and that are convenient in proximity. These include: CEO Leadership Institute; CEOs in Conversation; Northern and Southern California Leadership Conferences; and other statewide meetings (CCLC, n.d.).

**American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).** AACC hosts a President's Academy Summer Institute (PASI). PASI is a professional development program for CEOs or Presidents of member community colleges, providing intensive focus on current challenges, emerging trends, and opportunities unique to that position. The three-day institute focuses on issues of critical importance to success in the role of the community college President. The institute provides opportunities for newer presidents to develop mentor-mentee relationships with more seasoned Presidents, focusing on immediate challenges and opportunities that these presidents are facing on their campuses (AACC, 2009).

AACC also hosts a Future President's Institute (FPI), for aspiring community college presidents. FPI is an intensive five-day institute designed for senior level community college administrators on the direct path to a presidency. Participants will network with experienced CEOs, 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 Future Leaders Institute, or those who anticipate moving into a presidency within the next two to three years. Some of the topics for FPI include: Perspectives on Global Change; Leadership Trends and Issues; Profiles of the New Community College President; Hiring and the Interview Process, and Equity, Diversity, and Leadership Implications (AACC, 2009).

**National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC).** The primary goal of the NCCHC is to address the lack of Hispanic leaders in US community colleges. The NCCHC offers a Leadership Fellows Program (LFP) to develop a pool of highly qualified Hispanics and assist them in attaining executive administrative positions in community colleges (NCCHC, n.d.). NCCHC has three leadership-specific programs, a middle-level management LFP, designed for administrators who might hold Director, Associate Dean, or Dean positions and who have aspirations to become a community college executive administrator. The second program, an Executive LFP is designed for executive administrators who might hold Vice President, President, and Chancellor positions. The third program is a year-long program that consists of training and learning seminars, career preparation, mentoring with NCCHC leaders and fellows, an assessment of leadership, and a presentation at a NCCHC symposium held two times per year, once in Eastern US and once in Western US. LFPs, with the exception of the yearlong training program are approximately one week in length and usually charge a fee up to \$2,000.

All leadership institutes vary in their length, cost, and curriculum but the general premise is to build relationships, nurture support groups, equip administrators with the tools to lead, and to educate participants about the general expectations of executive administrative positions. Ultimately, these institutes, academies, and organizations

prepare the aspiring administrator to acquire effective leadership or executive management skills and to solicit mentors who can serve as an ally for advice or support (Leon, 2003). Latina/o CEOs in community colleges can make significant contributions to their faculty, staff, and students by recruiting and providing mentors who they can turn to for support or attending symposiums where they can acquire tools to become effective administrators and leaders at their community colleges.

### **Flourishing in Diverse Environments**

For Latina/os who hold executive administrative positions in community colleges, there are several factors that might be taken into consideration for them to flourish and persist in diverse academic environments. Many community colleges have large Latina/o student populations, yet the majority of faculty, staff, and administrators are considered non-Latina/o. Many Latina/os in key leadership positions are expected to prove competency and abilities at a level that might be magnified ten-fold. Ultimately, nobody is watched more closely than a Latina/o faculty member or administrator (Gutierrez et al., 2002). One perspective is that Latina/o community college middle-level and executive-level administrators are hired at two-year colleges because institutions want to place a minority administrator in a management position. The primary reason for this is because the college wants to present itself as an organization that promotes multicultural leaders and is culturally competent (López & Schultz, 1980).

Another obstacle that might hinder Latina/os aspiring to executive administrative positions is that some might perceive them as advocating only for the causes of Latina/o students. For middle-and executive-level administrators, the purpose of their roles is to help all students reach their academic goals, regardless of their ethnic background.

However, some leaders might be committed to the cause of certain ethnic groups, particularly their own, because they have experienced inequity or have seen a lack of attention paid to them during their years in academia. Some school boards are reluctant to hire minority Presidents because of negative feedback from predominantly Anglo personnel (Phelps & Tabler, 1996). Further, it is not uncommon for a multi-college district to have a minority college campus, which can then lead to hiring minority staff that offers services to the respective ethnic minority.

The role in selecting Latina/o CEOs by non-Latina/os has not been thoroughly documented by literature. However, there continues to be limited support or confidence in selecting Latina/o administrators with words like good but not exceptional credentials, a need for more seasoned experience, and limited maturity as a leader are frequently mentioned by faculty in executive administrative interviews. Faculty members have an image of whom they preferred to occupy leadership roles, and it was almost a mirror of current campus leaders. On campuses where Latina/os were under suspicion or scrutiny, colleagues in open forums utilized terms like emotional, isolated, indecisive, and playing favorites to describe Latina/o CEOs (Shaw, Valdez, & Rhoads; 1999). Latina/o CEOs are also perceived as aggressive, uncooperative, and not willing to confirm to the status quo (Gutierrez et al., 2002).

Being an executive administrator requires that aspiring leaders prepare themselves academically and professionally in order to undertake the role of a CEO. Further, building positive relationships, networking and competency are important characteristics that help one to succeed. Regardless of ethnicity, credentialing, or experience, detractors frequently question the qualifications and capabilities of any candidate. Ultimately,

proving one's competency through job performance is the standard by which one is measured.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided a detailed review for the need to investigate the circumstances that influence Latina/o participation as executive administrators in California community colleges. The literature review was divided into five major sections: (a) multiculturalism as it relates to CRT and its impact on Latina/o education and executive administrative positions; (b) demographics in the US, which might influence Latina/os in postsecondary education and, a contextualized description of California community college middle-level and executive administrative positions and what aspiring managers might expect in these positions; (c) the experiences--career path, education, and personal challenges--executive administrators, which might change their perceptions on leadership, and the environment where they work and how that carries influence in their leadership; (d) obstacles that might affect Latina/os from becoming executive administrators--from the dismal completion rates in K-12 education to the struggles of persistence and completion rates in postsecondary education; and, (e) the strategies and methods Latina/o administrators utilized in facing and overcoming their obstacles and challenges successfully.

The first section of the literature review provided evidence for the need to study Latina/o executive administrators from a multicultural perspective, rooted specifically in the premise that CRT places an emphasis on the needs of students on the peripheral of K-12 and postsecondary education, and how CRT might be used to further examine the presence of Latina/os in California community college executive administrative positions.



The second section of the literature review was a two-fold exploration of Latina/os in executive administrative positions. The first part discussed the demographics of Latina/os in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many of the opportunities for Latina/os in education have been aided by government support in the form of abolishing segregation and subsequently the prevalence of Affirmative Action programs. As the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century neared, much of the support provided by local, state, and federal governments waned as an influx of anti-immigration sentiment grew. As the census of 2010 indicated regarding the Latina/o population, they were the fastest growing minority group in the US. Therefore, the growth in the population is a major factor in how effectively Latina/o students are served in community colleges, particularly with the presence of Latina/o CEOs. The second part of the section gave a contextualized overview of middle-level and executive administrative positions, which provided the reader an overview of what aspiring administrators might expect as they take on leadership positions at their respective community colleges.

The third section of the literature review provided an overview of the experiences, perceptions, education, career path, and representation of Latina/o community college CEOs and some of the reasons there is a lack of representation. This overview was important because it allowed the reader to examine factors that have influenced the success and failures of Latina/o students, which subsequently might have influenced career choice. For the aspiring executive administrator, this section provided insight into the factors that influence the prevalence of Latina/os in CEO positions, from a lack of faculty in two-year colleges and universities to the challenges and stereotypes that

Latina/os have overcome to attain significant executive administrative positions in community colleges.

The fourth and fifth section of the literature review outlined Latina/o executive administrators in California community colleges, specifically with mentorship, leadership, and flourishing in diverse academic environments. The literature indicated that Latina/o mentors on community college campuses help Latina/o students because they are persons with similar ethnic backgrounds who might have had similar life experiences. These similarities help students understand that there are others like them who have succeeded in postsecondary education. These leaders can provide direction in the form of organizing support groups or other activities that might help Latina/o students' transition successfully into postsecondary education. It is these shared experiences that might provide the impetus for influencing the persistence, retention, and success of Latina/o students. For the Latina/o aspiring to become a CEO in community colleges, it is imperative to seek out mentors, to mentor others, and to attend professional development academies or workshops that might provide one with the tools to be a successful executive administrator.

Each of these sections provided evidence for the need to study Latina/o executive administrators in California community colleges and to further explore the reasons that influence their participation as community college leaders.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Latina/os have grown into the largest ethnic group in the US and many seek to attend community colleges as a pathway to reaching a four-year college or university. The presence of Latina/o executive administrators in California community colleges is important to the development and success of Latina/o students because they can serve as mentors who provide insight into what might be expected as Latina/o students enroll in postsecondary education. There is currently an under-representation of Latina/o community college executive administrators and this number is disproportionate to the number of Latina/o students served in California community colleges, which was 36 percent in the fall 2011 semester (Center for Student Success, 2011). Therefore, a need exists to investigate the career experiences of Latina/os who have progressed to community college executive level administrative positions in order to learn more about how to recruit and mentor Latina/o community college faculty and staff who have similar career aspirations. They might provide future generations of Latina/o students mentors who guide them as they progress from two-year to four-year colleges and universities, and subsequently to their chosen careers.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o executive-level leadership in community college education through in-depth interviews of eight current California community college executive administrators. More specifically, this study explored: (a) the experiences of Latina/o California community college executive administrators as related to their career paths, education, personal and professional challenges, leadership, and their self-perceptions of

the leadership expectations placed on them; (b) the understanding of community college leadership of Latina/o community college executive administrators based on their experiences; and, (c) the strategies used by Latina/o community college executive administrators in meeting the challenges and obstacles encountered during their rise from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions. The portraits developed by the researcher presented the lived experiences of the subjects as they progressed from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions and offer a blueprint to Latina/os who have similar career aspirations; and more succinctly, provide insight into how Latina/o California community college executive administrators might mentor and support the academic and professional development of aspiring Latina/o community college leaders.

### **Research Questions**

The research in this study focused on the following questions:

1. How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contribute to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?
2. How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?
3. What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced in their rise to California community college leadership positions?
4. What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their transition from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative approach and portraiture in methodology. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with eight executive administrators. The interviews included 20 questions, with follow-up queries for clarification. The purpose

for selecting a qualitative approach was to make a professional connection with the subjects in order to obtain in-depth perspectives of Latina/os in California community college executive administrative positions. The use of qualitative research allows the researcher to make knowledge claims based on multiple perspectives and meanings of individual experiences, with the intent of developing a pattern, or advocacy and participatory perspectives, collaborative or change oriented or both (Creswell, 2003).

Using a qualitative approach in this study was essential in capturing the lived experiences of the subjects. Latina/o community colleges administrators have encountered many challenges during their careers. Some of these challenges were similar, yet most were entirely different. It was important to capture these experiences through their lenses in hopes of providing aspiring CEOs guidance or direction in the pursuit of their career goals. Qualitative research is interpretive and constructivist in character, used to uncover unanswered queries about the complicated nature of phenomena drawn from the participants' viewpoint (Leedy & Ormrod, 2012). Further, the overall importance of the research becomes more valuable to the problem being addressed by the research (Creswell, 2007).

### **Portraiture**

Portraiture was utilized to capture the breadth and depth of the informants and to give the reader purposeful stories of the leadership trajectory of each subject interviewed for this dissertation. Portraiture captures the richness and dimensionality of human experience, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture is also considered a case study approach to qualitative research (Merriam, 1988). A case study employs multiple

forms of data rich in context to build the in-depth case (Creswell, 1998). Whether the researcher's presence is sustained and intensive or whether relatively brief but personal, as in in-depth interview studies, the researcher enters into the lives of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Using portraiture helps the researcher obtain valuable information that complements their study because the essence of the individual becomes more personal and provides more depth about the subject to the reader (Lightfoot-Lawrence & Davis, 1997).

Portraiture is a method of qualitative research used to enrich and enlighten the reader, giving a powerful overview of the breadth and depth of the subjects being portrayed. Further, the portraitist and subject negotiate their dialogue, which shapes their evolving image (Lightfoot-Lawrence & Davis, 1997). For this manuscript, portraiture allowed the researcher to give the reader a profound understanding of the subject through their lived experiences, which might be a catalyst for change in the development of Latina/o community college executive-level administrators.

### **Setting**

The term community is at the heart of a community college's mission. Community colleges offer a level of accessibility in terms of time, finances, and geography that cannot be offered at private colleges or universities. California community colleges or districts enroll at least 5,000 and up to 20,000 students per semester, many of who are Latina/o (Center for Student Success, 2011). Even though the demographics demonstrate a large Latina/o student population, the number of Latina/o faculty, staff and administrators employed by these academic institutions is surprisingly low.

## **Participants**

In order to identify the most representative sample of Latina/o community college executive administrators, the methods used by the researcher to solicit subjects was two-fold. First, the researcher conducted an electronic search of the California Community College Chancellors Office (CCCCO) and AACCA website to obtain a comprehensive and current list of California community college CEOs with Latina/o surnames. Second, the researchers own position as a Dean of Instruction was extremely helpful because of the professional and personal relationships that have been established in 12 years as a community college middle-level administrator. Therefore, this network was useful in selecting participants, which is considered purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007).

One of the researchers goals was to keep the number of interviews at a manageable number in order to make meaningful connections with the subjects. For this manuscript there were four male and four female community college executive administrators interviewed to ensure gender equity. There was no minimum years of service criteria set in the current position to be considered for the study. Other key characteristics that the researcher considered for the research questions included age, being US or foreign born, and if career paths were through academic affair/instruction, student services, human resources, business/administrative services departments, or from a non-academia related field.

A primary goal of the study was to determine the similarities and differences amongst the subjects in their rise to executive administrative positions in California community colleges. A second goal was to determine how race, ethnicity, culture, or racism might have influenced their career trajectory. A tertiary goal was for the

researcher to gather diverse perspectives regarding career options, challenges, and the outlook for aspiring Latina/o CEOs. Lastly, the researcher explored how Latina/o leaders might influence Latina/os to pursue careers as community college faculty, staff, and administrators, or to influence Latina/o students to pursue a postsecondary education and subsequently to become professionals who might make positive contributions to their community and chosen professions.

### **Human Subjects Considerations**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Pepperdine University reviewed the study proposal. The purpose of any institution of higher education's IRB process is to protect the human subjects in the study. This study contained minimal risk to Pepperdine's Graduate School of Education and Psychology, and to the participants. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2009), minimal risk is defined as "the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests" (p. 4).

Prior to the interviews, the researcher contacted the subjects via electronic mail to solicit interest in the study. Interview information was considered private and treated with confidentiality. Further, nothing in this study was construed as deceptive. Data results were reported in the aggregate and coding was used for identifying information. The human subjects who participated in this study were not named in any manner in the interviews and were assigned a pseudonym. Based on the data collected there were no psychological, physical, legal, social, or economic risks for subjects. Assuring



confidentially was written in the electronic mails disseminated to participants. As a reminder, subjects were reassured of confidentiality prior to their interviews.

Physically, the probability of discomfort arose from having to sit for 90 minutes to complete individual interviews. Legally, there were no risks to subjects because all interviews were voluntary and confidential. No personal or college names, or personal information was divulged, which minimized the risk for the researcher and Pepperdine University. Readers of the dissertation might be able to identify the subjects based on their portraits. As high-profile community college leaders, their personal and professional relationships have exposed them to being recognized. Colleagues might know their employment history or pertinent personal characteristics, which the reader might be able to associate with a subject even though personal or college names were kept confidential. Socially, participants did not feel a negative stigma associated with taking part in an interview of Latina/o California community college executive administrators. This was mitigated by the confidential nature of the interviews and by data analysis being done solely by the researcher. Lastly, there was no remuneration for participation in the interviews. As a benefit to Latina/o California community college faculty, staff and administrators, subject interviews might help guide those who aspire to a similar career path. For Latina/o students, this dissertation might benefit them in that they could be inspired to pursue a postsecondary degree and to pursue community college executive administrative positions or other professional careers. For current or aspiring administrators, this dissertation might inspire or dissuade them from pursuing executive-level administrative or CEO positions.

## **Instrumentation**

**Interview.** An interview instrument was utilized to explore the experiences, insights, and recommendations of this purposeful sample of Latina/o executive administrators (see Appendix A). The interview instrument consisted of a script and two sections of interview questions. Section one of the questions included six background questions to identify subject's ethnicity, age, birthplace, educational perceptions, and educational attainment. These questions included:

1. What is your ethnicity (e.g. Central American, Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South American, or Spanish)?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is your current age?
4. What is your level of education?
5. Did you always know you would go to college?
6. Did you attend a community college before a four-year college or university?

Section two of the interview questions contained fourteen primary questions, which outline three primary areas. The first area highlighted family, life experiences, and social experiences. The second area detailed professional and leadership experiences, including administrative positions, mentorship opportunities, career progress, and obstacles or challenges that subject's faced as they progressed in their careers. Lastly, primary questions also contained information about the potential outlook and opportunities for Latina/os in community college executive-level positions. The primary questions included:

1. What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?

2. How long have you been a community college executive administrator?
3. What was your first employment position in a community college?
4. What was your first administrative position?
5. What made you choose community college education as a profession?
6. When did you realize you wanted to become an executive administrator?
7. Can you recall mentoring tools or techniques that you found to help Latina/o faculty, staff, or middle-level administrators reach executive administrative positions?
8. How do you know when your mentorship has influenced the career of an aspiring executive administrator?
9. Do you have specific examples of how you have served as a mentor or when someone mentored you? If yes, please share.
10. In your rise to executive administrative positions, what challenges or barriers did you encounter?
11. Describe some of the efforts or recruitment practices to hire Latina/o community college CEOs?
12. What do you see as the possible barriers to Latina/o CEOs?
13. As the Latina/o population continues to grow and more Latina/o students enter community colleges, what is the future of Latina/os in executive administrative positions?
14. What do you want your legacy to be?

The background questions in section one were asked to develop a more thorough background of the subjects. These six background questions were important for the researcher in order to make connections to basic information that may or may not play a part in why participants responded the way that they did. Ethnicity and cultural background plays a major role and can influence the way in which an individual sees the world and their life experiences. The cultural background of the subject was quite

important because the researcher made connections regarding language and heritage, being monolingual or bilingual, being US or foreign born, and ethnicity. As the literature indicated in Chapter 2, not all Latina/os are the same, regardless of sharing a common heritage. Therefore, this information was also important to make connections regarding personal experiences and expectations from family.

The place of birth was important to help determine if the subject had more of a connection with their country of birth. The age range of the participant was used to analyze the historical time frame in which the subject spent their formative years, including college and early career. If the subject was a product of Affirmative Action or other programs as outlined in the literature review, this might explain some of their influences or experiences. Latina/os who attended community colleges or four-year colleges and universities during the 1960s or 1970s may have different cultural perspectives or lived experiences than those who attended postsecondary education in the 1980s or 1990s. A subject's level of education might help to enlighten the researcher and reader to the level of academic learning each person attained. One important part of the dissertation entailed determining if a Doctorate Degree is a requirement to becoming an executive administrator if a Master's Degree suffices. Further, the researcher hoped to learn if the subject perceptions of obtaining a Doctorate Degree had changed throughout their careers and if hiring committees, colleagues, or constituents within ones organization perceived attainment of a Doctorate Degree as important.

Background questions four through six, and primary questions one to five related to life experiences that shaped education and subsequent employment in the community college system. Educational attainment and goals can be indicative because they might

help influence Latina/os who have considered attending two-and four-year colleges make measured choices about their education. The subject's life experiences might also help to illuminate the researcher and reader about how individual circumstances in life--personal, professional, or social-- might have influenced career choice. The length of service as an executive administrator is critical because it might shed light on the importance of establishing collegial relationships within an organization. This might also enlighten the researcher and reader on the value of persevering in a college executive-level position regardless of the obstacles or challenges encountered. Learning the subject's first position in a community college helped the researcher to develop common themes in the attainment of executive administrative positions. A subject's first administrative position might help to reinforce the blueprint for progressing in executive administrative positions, which might help guide aspiring leaders. Careers in community college education, specifically as administrators, might also bring light to the type of personality traits and background of those who might pursue a profession as a community college administrator. Moreover, understanding why the subjects selected this profession and when they realized this was their career path might also shed light on professional goals.

Primary interview questions seven to nine explored the importance of mentoring. First, the researcher learned what effective tools the executive administrator utilized to mentor current and aspiring administrators. Second, the subject was asked to identify specific circumstances when they were certain their mentorship influenced an aspiring administrator. Third, the researcher discussed with the subjects specific instances when they were mentored as they progressed through the leadership ranks and how that might have influenced their career or changed their perceptions, positive or negative, about

mentorship. Primary questions ten to twelve discussed the challenges and barriers that aspiring CEOs are likely to face as they climb the administrative ladder, what they perceive as possible barriers, and what the future of Latina/os in executive administrative positions might be. Question eleven discussed the future outlook for Latina/os seeking administrative positions and what the subjects believed the possibilities are. The final question asked what legacy the subject would like to leave when they have completed their executive administrative career.

It was important for the researcher to obtain similar and different responses in order to help address the deficiencies of aspiring Latina/o executive administrators through professional development, mentorship opportunities, or purposeful literature that helps with personal and career growth. These 20 background and primary questions were paramount because they highlighted the human experience, learning about the individual, understanding their trajectory, and the perceptions they might have of their positions or the organizations where they work or have worked. The background questions were utilized to compliment the profile of the individual portraits and the four research questions as follows:

1. How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?
2. How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?
3. What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o CEOs faced in their rise to California community college leadership positions?

4. What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their transition from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?

Question 1 explored participants' perceived experiences regarding their career path, education, personal or professional experiences, and how this has influenced their understanding of Latina/o community college executive leadership. Question 2 asked the subjects to share how their professional, personal, and academic experiences have impacted their career paths, challenges or expectations placed on them. Question 3 probed further into the challenges and obstacles Latina/o leaders have faced in their progression to executive-level positions. Question 4 asked for strategies and recommendations they propose to aspiring CEOs in order to face the challenges and obstacles they might encounter. The 20 supporting prompt questions are linked through the literature review to one or more of the four main research questions to ensure credibility. The following four tables highlight the relationship between the research and interview questions to the corresponding literature.

Table 1

*Research Question 1 Correlation with Interview Questions*

Research Question 1	Background Questions	Primary Questions	Cited Literature
How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?	4- What is your level of education?	1-What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?	American Association of University Women 2001; American Council of Education 2005; Amey & VanDerLinden 2002; Arellano & Padilla 1996; Astin & Oseguera 2004; Cohen & Brawer 2008; Cohen & March 1974; Delos Santos & Vega 2008; Castaneda & Katsinas 2002; Haro & Lara 2003; Jensen & Giles 2006; Leon 2003; Leon & Nevarez 2007; Lopez & Schultz 1980; Martinez & Aguirre
	5-Did you always know you would go to college?	2-How long have you been a community college executive administrators?	
	6-Did you attend a community college before a four-year college or university?	3-What was your first employment position in a community college?	
		14-What was your first	

(Continued)

Research Question 1	Background Questions	Primary Questions	Cited Literature
		administrative position?	2003; Rendon 2003; Romo & Salas 2003; Santiago 2006; Santiago 1996; Valverde 2003
		7- Can you recall mentoring or techniques that you found to help Latina/o faculty, staff, or middle-level administrators reach executive administrative positions?	
		8-How do you know when your mentorship has influenced the career of an aspiring CEO?	
		9-Do you have specific examples of how you have served as a mentor or when someone mentored you?	
		10-In your rise to executive administrative positions, what challenges did you encounter?	

Table 2

*Research Question 2 Correlation with Interview Questions*

Research Question 2	Background Questions	Primary Questions	Cited Literature
How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?	4- What is your level of education?	1-What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?	American Association of University Women 2001; American Council of Education 2005; Amey & VanDerLinden 2002; Arellano & Padilla 1996; Center for Student Success 2011; Cohen & Brawer 2008; Delos Santos & Vega 2008; Gandara 1995; Gutierrez & Castaneda 2002; Haro & Lara 2003; Leon 2003; Leon & Nevarez 2007; Lopez & Schultz 1980; Martinez & Aguirre 2003; Oseguera, Locks & Vega 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini 1991; Rendon 2003; Romo & Salas 2003; Saenz & Ponjuan 2009; Santiago 2006; Santiago 1996; Valverde 2003; Vaughan 1989
	5-Did you always know you would go to college?	2-How long have you been a community college executive administrator?	
	6-Did you attend a community college before a four-year college or university?	3-What was your first employment position in a community college?	
		4-What was your first administrative position?	
		7- Can you recall mentoring or techniques that you found to help Latina/o faculty, staff, or middle-level administrators reach executive administrative positions?	
		8-How do you know when your mentorship has influenced the career of an	

(Continued)



Research Question 2	Background Questions	Primary Questions	Cited Literature
		aspiring executive administrator?	
		9-Do you have specific examples of how you have served as a mentor or when someone mentored you?	
		10-In your rise to executive administrative positions, what challenges or barriers did you encounter?	

Table 3

*Research Question 3 Correlation with Interview Questions*

Research Question 3	Background Questions	Primary Questions	Cited Literature
What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced as California community college leaders?	3-How old are you?	1-What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?	American Association of University Women 2001; American Council of Education 2005; Amey & VanDerLinden 2002; Arellano & Padilla 1996; Center for Student Success 2011; Cohen & Brawer 2008; Cohen & March 1974; Delos Santos & Vega 2008; Gandara 1995; Grubb 2001; Gutierrez, Castaneda & Katsinas 2002; Haro & Lara 2003; Jensen & Giles 2006; Leon 2003; Leon & Nevarez 2007; Lopez & Schultz 1980; Oseguera, Locks, & Vega 2008; Pascarella 1991
	4-What is your level of education?	11-Have you been aware of the changes in the efforts to hire Latina/o community college executive administrators?	
		12-What do you see as the possible barriers to Latina/o executive administrators?	
		13-As the Latina/o population continues to grow and more Latina/o students enter community colleges, what is the future of Latina/os in executive administrative positions?	

Table 4

*Research Question 4 Correlation with Interview Questions*

Research Question	Background Questions	Primary Questions	Cited Literature
What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and	3-How old are you?	1-What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood,	American Association of University Women 2001; American Council of Education 2005; Arellano & Padilla 1996; Astin &
	4-What is your level of education?		

(Continued)

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obstacles encountered in their transition from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?	adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?	Oseguera 2004; Cohen & Brawer 2008; Cohen & March 1974; Haro & Lara 2003; Jensen & Giles 2006; Leon 2003; Leon & Nevarez 2007; Lopez & Schultz 1980; Puente 2012; Rendon 2003; Rendon 2006 Romo & Salas 2003;
	11-Have you been aware of the changes in the efforts to hire Latina/o community college executive administrators?	Rumberger & Thomas 2000; Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs 2005; Santiago 1996; Valverde 2003; Vaughan 1989
	12-What do you see as the possible barriers to Latina/o executive administrators?	
	13-As the Latina/o population continues to grow and more Latina/o students enter community colleges, what is the future of Latina/os in executive administrative positions?	

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During face-to-face interviews, which took no longer than 90 minutes, every interview question was asked and answered. The researcher is optimistic that the questions provided the impetus for participant responses to be forthright. A primary goal was for the subjects to give the researcher, future community college leaders, and the reader unique stories of what was encountered as they were promoted to executive administrative positions. Interviews help to elicit information that examines the personal experiences and perspectives of a similar group of participants. Transparency helped to develop portraits that depicted commonalities in career paths, yet outlined individual obstacles or challenges each subject overcame, which proved to be informational, inspirational, and transformational for aspiring Latina/o community college executive-level administrators (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

### **Validity**

A panel of experts who have written qualitative or mixed methods dissertations, particularly utilizing interview protocol, participated in the validation of the interview questions and instrument: Dr. Jorge Sanchez, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness and

Research Planning at Coastline Community College, Fountain Valley, California; Dr. Diane Colvin, Professor of English as a Second Language at Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, California; and, Dr. Maria Lerma, Professor of English as a Second Language at Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa California. During the past 20 years Dr. Sanchez has served as an instrumentation expert for more than 70 dissertations. Dr. Colvin's dissertation study examined the qualities and experiences of the community college Dean. Therefore, her expertise related to this manuscript in that both studies explored the experiences of middle-level or executive-level administrators. Dr. Lerma's dissertation research was on student engagement and online learning, and she has extensive experience in the field of linguistics, a discipline many of the subjects and researcher have studied.

Immediately following the preliminary oral defense of the manuscript, the researcher asked dissertation committee members for feedback regarding the effectiveness of the research and prompt questions. After validation of the interview instrument by the panel of experts and Pepperdine's IRB approval, the researcher began the process of recruiting interview subjects. Once the subjects had agreed to participate the researcher sent them interview questions to review prior to their scheduled interviews.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to each interview the researcher invited the subjects to complete background questions in order to maximize interview time. On the day of the interview, the researcher summarized the purpose of the study to the subject and engaged in conversation before starting the interview. The conversation was friendly, yet respectful and professional, to ensure that the researcher and subject established a collegial

connection that would yield positive dialogue and purposeful responses. Each subject reviewed and signed a consent form that was previously sent to them. A copy of the signed consent form was given to each subject and one kept for the researcher's records. The interviews were of a semi-structured nature and included open-ended questions. The interviews provided opportunities to understand the experiences of Latina/o California community college administrators as they have progressed to executive-level positions. After completing interviews, the subjects were reminded that the researcher would electronically mail a copy of transcribed notes for clarification of collected data. This was done prior to the interpretation of the findings to ensure that analysis was accurate.

Not only were interviews recorded and later transcribed but also, the researcher kept an interview journal to capture post-interview thoughts and perspectives. The journal was kept so that the researcher could go back at a later time to assess validity. To ensure the data collected from the interviews was thorough, the researcher reviewed the content within forty-eight hours. Qualitative studies gather an enormous amount of data regarding one topic, while permitting the researcher to serve as a tool and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2007). Additional note taking helped to clarify any themes that were not clear and assisted the researcher in asking follow up questions. Overall feedback was valuable in composing a final draft of the field notes, especially if there were discrepancies or inconsistencies in the responses.

A second purpose of the journal notes was that they allowed the researcher to review key components of the interviews, which helped to develop themes that were used to interpret data in a meaningful manner. For example, if participants attended community college before transferring to a four-year college or university, this

information was helpful in deducing that the subjects might have taken a non-traditional but common path to obtaining their college degrees. Another component that addressed the usefulness of journal notes was that the researcher could determine if follow-up interviews were needed to support the data.

The researcher proposed to conduct all interviews at a mutually agreed upon location so that interruptions were minimized. If the subject insisted on meeting at their respective colleges or districts the researcher made that concession. The purpose of the interviews was to gain information from the subjects regarding their perceptions and experiences as it related to their rise to executive-level positions. The researchers role was to provide clear explanations of the questions, making the subjects feel at ease in the interview environment, and operating a digital recorder for data collection.

The consent forms, transcriptions, and interview journal notes were stored securely. Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants was a top priority and they were given the option to stop the interview if they were ever uncomfortable or to bypass a particular question. A primary goal of the interviews was for the subject to respond with thoughtfulness and depth, which contributed to the importance of the data and subsequent analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Responses to the research and corresponding interview questions were compiled and a rate of frequency was noted to ensure proper coding once data was analyzed. The literature review was used utilized to identify and group data into meaningful themes that proved validity for the study. Any emergent themes were analyzed by doctoral graduates with coding experience, and then titled under each category. External coders were

included to reinforce accuracy of data and to bring light to any themes that might have been overlooked by the researcher. The researcher consistently referred to the literature to ensure that responses were connected with the appropriate category or theme.

Once journal and transcribed notes were analyzed, and topics and themes were developed, the researcher began to develop a detailed portrait of the subjects by assembling the pieces of the interviews together to draft a meaningful manuscript. Based on the data themes, the researcher drafted an organic piece of work that might help aspiring Latina/o executive- administrators progress through the community college administrative ranks.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My interest in this study stems from two perspectives. First, I am a Latina/o community college Dean of Instruction, with aspirations of becoming a community college Vice President and President. Writing the portraits of these eight leaders not only benefited me, but others with similar career aspirations. Second, my role as researcher traces its origins to 2001, when I was hired as a full-time English as a Second Language (ESL) Professor/English Literacy and Civics Coordinator. The position as English Literacy and Civics Coordinator was my beginning as a community college administrator. As the Coordinator, my direct supervisors were the Dean of Instruction and Student Services and the Vice President of Continuing Education. They encouraged me to pursue an administrative career and believed I possessed the qualities to one day be a community college President. As an inexperienced middle-level administrator, I was grateful for their support and confidence in my potential. At every possible moment, I sought them out for advice and guidance when faced with difficult personnel, program, or

managerial issues. Having these seasoned administrators to turn to for guidance helped to ease my transition from faculty member to administrator, which lessened the impact and challenges of my new position.

Upon my promotion to the position of Associate Dean of Instruction and Student Services at the same college, two of my colleagues in the Dean ranks were fellow Latina/os. Not only had I hoped for their support, but also the fact we shared similar cultural and ethnic experiences gave me optimism that I could rely on them for direction or advice as it related to my professional growth. Even though my relationship with them was collegial, I soon learned that mentors were hard to come by, which led me to explore this topic of study.

As I have become more seasoned in my administrative career, I have been encouraged and now aspire to pursue executive administrative positions. Fellow managers and colleagues have encouraged me to pursue my Doctorate Degree, to attend leadership academies or training programs, and to join organizations that might assist me in my development as a future CEO. During some of these professional development opportunities, I have reflected on how effective and helpful it might be for other Latina/os with shared experiences and similar career goals to read stories of some of the current executive administrators in California community colleges. Many of these leaders are nearing the end of their careers, but are also considered the pioneers. Their experiences in facing obstacles of language barriers, discrimination, or stereotypes might assist a future generation of aspiring Latina/o leaders as they progress through the administrative ranks.

All of the subjects interviewed for this manuscript have traveled a unique path in their career. It was important to learn of their experiences in order to develop portraits that enriched the reader and placed them firmly in the subject's professional experiences. For the researcher, celebrating and capturing the essence of these subjects through their lenses served as a guide to turn to when faced with challenging circumstances in the pursuit of my own career aspirations. Ultimately, these portraits might be used as a tool of motivation and as a reminder that being a Level-5 (Collins, 2001) or servant leader (Greenleaf, 2002) might leave a positive legacy for those who follow.



## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Introduction**

This chapter restates the purpose, research questions, and research design of the study. The chapter also presents the study findings of the research, which includes individual portraits of the subjects interviewed for the dissertation and a presentation of findings for each research question. Within each research question finding section, interview questions were included to help correlate responses as they are highlighted in Chapter 3.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o executive-level leadership in community college education through in-depth interviews of selected current California community college executive-level administrators. More specifically, this study explored: (a) the experiences of Latina/o California community college executive administrators as related to their career paths, education, personal and professional challenges, leadership, and their self-perceptions of the leadership expectations placed on them; (b) the understanding of community college leadership of Latina/o community college executive administrators based on their experiences; and, (c) the strategies used by Latina/o community college executive administrators in meeting the challenges and obstacles encountered during their ascension from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions. The portraits developed by the researcher presented the lived experiences of the subjects as they progressed from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions and offer a blueprint to Latina/os who have similar career aspirations; and more succinctly, provide insight into how Latina/o California community college executive administrators might

mentor and support the academic and professional development of aspiring Latina/o community college leaders.

### **Research Questions**

The research in this study focused on the following questions:

1. How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?
2. How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?
3. What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced in California community college leadership positions?
4. What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their rise from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative approach and portraiture in methodology. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with eight executive administrators. The interviews included 20 questions, with follow-up queries for clarification. The purpose for selecting a qualitative approach was to make a personal and professional connection with the subjects in order to obtain in-depth perspectives of Latina/os in California community college executive-level positions. Portraiture was utilized to capture the breadth and depth of the informants and to give the reader purposeful and compelling stories of the leadership paths of each subject interviewed. In order to write a comprehensive dissertation the researcher interviewed four males and four females. The interviews were of a semi-structured nature and included open-ended questions. Further,

the interviews provided opportunities to understand the experiences of Latina/o California community college executive leaders as they have progressed to executive-level positions. Each response to the research and corresponding interview questions were compiled and a rate of frequency was noted to ensure proper coding once data was analyzed. Any emergent themes were analyzed by the researcher and doctoral graduates with coding experience, and then titled under categories. The external coders were invited to reinforce accuracy of data and to bring light to any themes that might have been overlooked by the researcher.

### **Background Interview Questions**

The following are the background questions utilized to obtain information regarding the ethnicity, place of birth, age, and educational goals and attainment of each of the eight subjects. This information was important in knowing more about some of the diverse perspectives each of the subjects might have possessed based on historical events, gender, language barriers, or education. It is these experiences that have shaped the career path of the subjects in very distinct ways.

Table 5

#### *Subject Demographics*

Question	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
What is your ethnicity?	Puerto Rican	Mexican	Mexican	Central American	Cuban/Puerto Rican	Spanish	Mexican	Mexican
Where were you born?	New York	California	Oklahoma	Nicaragua	New York	Colorado	California	Texas
What is your current age?	66 and above	50 to 65	50 to 65	50 to 65	40 to 49	50 to 65	50 to 65	50 to 65

(Continued)

Question	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
What is your level of education?	MA/MS	Ed.D.	Ph.D.	Ed.D.	Ed.D.	Ed.D.	Ed.D.	MA/MS
Did you always know you would attend college?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Did you attend community college before a four-year college or university?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No

## The Portraits

The portraits begin with the researchers unfiltered and immediate impressions of the subjects in order to introduce the reader to the person and set the tone of the interview. Second, the portraits are interwoven with quotes to maintain the integrity of the story and dialogue. Lastly, the portraits conclude with the subject's perspectives about their legacy and perceptions about the outlook and future prospects of Latina/os in community college executive administrative positions.

### Subject 1

Subject 1 exudes an aura of wisdom and inner strength that conveys being a respected leader on his campus. Of all the subjects interviewed, the researcher is of the belief that Subject 1 mirrors him in more ways than one. There is a shared heritage, a similar career path up to this point in the researcher's career, and both yearn to be on our respective college campuses over the politics of the boardroom and the ceremonial protocol of community events that administrators must attend.

Subject 1 was born in New York City and raised in the heavily populated Latino community of Spanish Harlem. Even though his father did not have a postsecondary education he was very involved in the lives of Subject 1 and his siblings. Subject 1's father served as a surrogate father to many of the children in the neighborhood whose fathers were not present as a result of being incarcerated or addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Subject 1 emphasized:

“One thing was certain early on was that my parents ensured we all valued education. We grew up in a rough neighborhood where there were gangs, drugs, and lots of dropouts. The siblings were able to get through those obstacles because of our parents belief in their children and education.”

Subject 1 was a student at Bronx Community College for one year before transferring to City University in New York. After leaving college he joined Volunteers and Service to America (VISTA) where his first assignments were in East Los Angeles, which was his introduction to the poverty areas of California. After spending some time in VISTA and working for a university in New Mexico, Subject 1 came back to California in the early to middle 1970s to enroll in a Master's program at a university in Southern California. As he neared graduation Subject 1 applied to a community college teaching position in Northern California and began to teach English and Reading Skills. For the next 28 years, Subject 1 worked at that college, briefly as a faculty member, before transitioning to administration in his third year. Subject 1's genesis as an administrator was as a Director. His subsequent positions included serving as Assistant Dean, Dean, and Vice President of Instruction. His last stand at that Northern California community college that he called home epitomizes what many CEOs must balance and astutely puppeteer, networks and politics.

Subject 1 asserted:

“Background politics can be very nasty. During my last year at the college, the Chancellor who was hired was looking to place his friends from Chicago into CEO positions. I thought to myself that I had better start to look for a new job. You could feel the vibes. I felt I might be demoted to Vice President or that I should start looking for other positions. That’s when this position became available in 2002.”

Subject 1 chose community college education as a profession because the mission fit into what he had been doing as a community organizer in the VISTA program. “I was looking to work in a place and with folks with little or no socio-economic means, not in an ivory tower. People who needed a second chance, to help build a more vibrant and educated Latino community”. Subject 1 knew he wanted to become a community college President when he reached the Dean level. Conversely, he knew he did not want to become a Chancellor at a multi-college district:

“To this day, my best days are when I do not go to the district office. My best days are when I am on campus, when I am here all day long. I feel like I am doing my duty. I do have to interact, I have to do the politics, I have to get on the phone and lobby for dollars, but this is where I love to be, on campus.”

Another motivator for Subject 1 is what he called a mission within the mission:

“The mission within the mission is in essence what we have within our blood. Our family is the Latino community. You realize that when we are in a group of Latina/o administrators, the conversations shift to things we do and share with each other as to how we might share more resources with the Latina/o community--supplemental instruction, mentors, and role models--we try to do that from students to employees to managers, and to fellow executives at conferences.”

Subject 1 confirmed that mentorship, workshops, and professional development are tools that assist many Latina/os aspiring to become CEOs. Another factor that might influence the hiring of Latina/os is the composition of the faculty on hiring committees and the traits that many possess. As Latina/os progress through the administrative ranks,

it is imperative that they are prepared to assume higher leadership positions, to encourage colleagues to persist in the field of education, and to be the connection for aspiring leaders. How did Subject 1 know when his mentorship influenced the career of an aspiring CEO?

“When you see them moving up the chain. It’s easier said than done. There’s a lot of talking and training that does not happen in books or in the union contract. Getting into administration is relatively easy compared to staying in education and growing in administration.”

Other characteristics that Subject 1 referenced were humility, ego, and integrity. Subject 1 worked with a colleague who served as a Chancellor of a Northern California district. Not only was this CEO a rising star in community colleges but also, she began to believe that her position entitled her to fame and the perks of a CEO. Subject 1 went on to say that unfortunately many administrators who reach CEO positions start to believe they are omnipotent, untouchable, and that the rules do not apply to them. He talks about his colleagues fall from grace with much introspection. “I’ve seen people get into that particular stratosphere where they lose that sense of morality and ethics they had when they were children, you feel you are not bound by social rules and law”.

The obstacles that Subject 1 had to endure were mostly dealing with stereotypes or what he called, “quasi-racism”. “The perspective is that you got to be a Dean or a Vice President because you are Latina/o and you don’t have much to offer but the color of your skin”. Another challenge was the community perspective:

“You must also fight that battle within the community. You have to deal with the Rotary Club and City Council. For example, when you are at functions in the community, people make comments about your name or allude to long-standing stereotypes. Those things are still out there, especially in this part of the county. I would rather hear it up front rather than believe those types of remarks or stereotypes are gone.”

Institutionally, Subject 1 discussed how faculty, community issues, and certain Board of Trustees could be perceived as possible barriers to Latina/o CEOs:

“At some interviews I’ve gone to most of the Boards are the traditional good old boys clubs, all Caucasian board members who are businessmen. You can feel the vibe. At a certain level—to put it bluntly—you feel the racism. Depending on how recently arrived you are, whether you are first generation or second generation and regardless of how intelligent, bright, or brilliant you may be, if people hear a little bit of an accent they go crazy. They think this guy doesn’t know English. Of course he knows English, it’s first generation stuff. I’ve spoken to first generation managers and they’ve seen that reaction too.”

**Future and legacy.** Subject 1 believes that the future of Latina/o CEOs is bright.

“We will see a growth in the number of Latina/os in executive positions. I see it as a bright future.” And when asked what he wanted his legacy to be he alluded to the need to have a representative number of Latina/o faculty and students:

“I hope that our faculty becomes representative of the Latina/o community. I hope we have a larger pool of Latina/os coming out of graduate schools and sitting in that chair (*pointing to the head of the table where candidates sit for final interviews*). If we see more Latina/os coming into this office for second level interviews that would be a wonderful legacy.”

## **Subject 2**

Subject 2 greeted the researcher in his office and immediately made one feel like we’ve known each other forever. He conveyed a warm persona and the qualities of a man of the people. Subject 2 seemed as if he would be just as comfortable in a boardroom with the Board of Trustees as he would having lunch with the janitorial staff on his college campus. As the interview commenced, the trait the researcher was immediately drawn to is Subject 2’s humility, which is a trait all leaders should aspire to have if they are to be great leaders.



Subject 2 was born in Brawley, a town in the Imperial Valley in Eastern San Diego County. He had very humble beginnings and for him, family shaped who he is today. His family influenced him into becoming the first in his extended family to obtain a college degree. Subject 2's great-grandfather was the first who saw the importance for providing opportunities for Latina/os. His grandfather was born in the US but lived the first 10 years of his life in Mexico. Even at that young of age, he realized that he needed to live in America to provide a better opportunity for generations after him. With an innate intelligence and passion for learning he hoped that his children and grandchildren would become college graduates.

Fast forward many years later to the time Subject 2's grandfather and grandmother were raising their own children. His grandfather's resilience was evident when Subject 2's mother was about to be enrolled in the local elementary school for Latina/os, which was housed in an old World War I US Army barracks. At that time there was also a school for African Americans, R School, and one for the Caucasian children, L School. Subject 2 conveyed the fortitude his grandfather demonstrated when he demanded that his daughter be allowed to attend L School:

“He looked at the schools and liked what he saw at L School. My mother was very light-skinned so you couldn't tell that she had Latina/o features so my grandfather took her over there and spoke to the Principal and he said no, you'll have to go to the Latina/o school. My father said no, this is the school closest to our home and this is the school I want my daughter to go to. He ended up going to the Superintendent to demand that she be allowed in L School. The Superintendent relented.”

Subject 2 speaks proudly of his mother being the first Latina to attend L School. However, being the first meant that Subject 2's family had to take a stand and fight for what they believed was equal access to education:

“My mother was walked to school and when she was picked up by my grandmother the Principal was outside and told her that they could not guarantee the safety of her daughter. My grandmother went home crying and afraid. When my grandfather got home and heard of what was said he went straight to the school and told the principal, you have an obligation to protect my child from the time they are out of school until they are home and the law says that. He was very well ahead of this time. The next year, the US Army barracks burned down, so guess where all the Latina/os ended up? At L School.”

From an early age, Subject 2 knew he would obtain a postsecondary education. His grandfather would continually tell him he was going to be the first in the family to go to college and make the family proud. That really set the tone for the rest of the generations to come in Subject 2’s family. Subject 2 began his postsecondary education in a community college. About 2 weeks before obtaining his AA Degree he had received his cap and gown from the college. When Subject 2’s grandfather came over to his house he told him to try it on, but he did not want to because his grandfather would see him at graduation. His grandfather said, “You don’t know what’s going to happen between now and then. I want to see you. I want to gaze at you because this is a proud moment for me”. Subject 2’s grandfather was someone who was always big on technology. At that moment he gave his grandson the digital watch off of his wrist as a gift for graduation. The following scene between grandfather and grandson turned out to be prophetic:

“There I am with my cap and gown and my grandfather takes the Texas Instruments digital watch off of his wrist and hands it to me. I said, grandpa why? I am going to graduate in two weeks. He said no, no, I want you to have it right now. Little did I know that three days later he would die in an accident so he didn’t get to see me, but he did get to see me if you know what I mean?”

After receiving his AA Degree, Subject 2 continued his undergraduate studies at a university in Southern California. Subject 2 loved working with people and originally wanted to become a social worker. Soon after obtaining his Bachelors Degree, he began to work as a counselor at the same school where he completed his AA Degree. He

became the first counselor in the educational talent search TRIO program, which mirrored his experiences and professionally fulfilled him:

“TRIO was my first experience helping students and their families, and encouraging them to pursue whatever their dreams were and not letting obstacles get in their way. That was my start. The challenge was to help minorities be the first in their families to get their degrees and to better their lives to be role models. This is my charge to this day. In TRIO, the experiences resembled what I grew up with.”

Subject 2 never had aspirations to go into administration at the community college level. He felt administrators were not connected to students. Further, he knew he was not a political person, which most CEOs must be. After the TRIO counselor position Subject 2 became a Director of Financial Aid, a Dean, and Vice President of Student Services. The Vice President position lasted 13 years until he assumed the Interim President position. What provided the impetus for Subject 2 to apply to that Interim President position?

“My mentor stated to me, you are going to apply? He had applied for that same position but had been turned down. He believed many faculty members were afraid of him because he held you accountable. He made sure you were working. He did not like lazy people. He was a taskmaster.”

Subject 2's mentor, Dr. L, didn't cut anyone slack. If you were a Latina/o his expectation of you was much higher because you had a lot to prove. Dr. L is the one who encouraged Subject 2 to pursue his Doctorate Degree and administrative positions. He believed Subject 2 owed it to his culture, to his people, and to those who came after him. He was really big on mentoring. “Dr. L said we need more Latina/os who have Doctorate Degrees and who assume more leadership roles”. Dr. L saw in Subject 2 the characteristics of an administrator. “He was tough, but a phenomenal mentor.”

Subject 2 has also performed his share of mentoring in his career and learned early on that he should be a mentor for those who follow him. One particular case is of a Dean who he has mentored for the past 13 years:

“He has the same management style that my mentor and predecessor Dr. L had, you know *ha chingasos (abrasive/in your face)*. What I have done is mentor him and told him his passion is where it needs to be. You are first in your generation to attend college. You have the best interest of your students. You are good at what you do. You hold people accountable. Your delivery, we need to work on that. You have to be careful not to burn your bridges along the way. You need to be effective at what you do, but you don’t want to be ostracized at that executive table. You don’t want to be known as the guy who everyone says, oh God, we have to deal with him. He is out of control. You have to listen. You have to be a player in this whole scheme. You have to be supportive to get the support. You have to be factual, deliberate, and have a plan at all times. You need to be able to have a defensible plan and you need to be persistent without being in their face. That’s the message I tend to give. The main thing you can do as a person, and you have to be that person before you are the position. You have to develop trust in people and mutual respect. You treat everyone--be they student, be they custodian, be they whatever, Board Member, a CEO--you treat everyone with dignity and respect and you will get it back ten-fold. When they see that is who you are and that it’s not a façade you are putting on. The trust will come.”

As Subject 2 progressed in his career he believed that administrators, particularly higher level ones, had the ability to impact policy that would help all students. “I saw all the work that was there politically to make sure that students needs were met through student services. I realized that I could be that leader to ensure at the executive level that services were not gouged along the way”. Subject 2 also discussed the positive and negative aspect of being raised and working in the community where he is now the President:

“Most of the people who come to this community only see, my God it is 112 degrees, it’s ugly, it’s dead, there’s nothing to do. People look at it with all the negative stuff. Those who have been here forever look at it differently. The people are wonderful, the opportunity to be bicultural. In my opinion it’s the best place to raise a family. Many President’s from the outside have come here and have had mixed results. They don’t

necessarily understand the community. As a local boy, the reception I receive from the community is wonderful. Even last night we had a basketball scrimmage. I saw a woman who was a librarian at a local elementary school when I was coming to this college and working as an instructional aide. She and her husband follow the basketball team so they are always supporting the team. She says with almost tears in her eyes, I can't tell you how happy I am that you got the full time appointment. I told my husband when they made you the interim that they were not going to choose him. They always do that. They always go outside and when that didn't happen I thought that's wonderful. And that's the reception I've gotten from the community. They are very supportive. With that comes a huge responsibility."

Subject 2 also talked openly about the challenges and obstacles he and other Latina/os face, as well as those who aspire to executive administrative positions. First, Subject 2 didn't believe that he had progressed in his career because of his ethnicity. He hopes that he climbed the administrative ladder because of his hard work, expertise, and involvement in the community. Second, before he pursued those higher-level positions he made sure that he was prepared for those challenges, which he believes is a big part of the equation. Further, he believes one cannot work in silos if they are truly able to be garner allies within the organization he or she works in. Ensuring that he is active in campus activities and committees demonstrates to the constituency that he cares. Being a people person is key:

"You need to get out of your office. From day one I made a huge effort to make my rounds. It takes up to 90 minutes. At first people would say why is he checking up on me. Then they realized I cared about this institution. I've worked hard to establish that trust and familiarity. That thing about being a president and people think they cannot talk to you. Why not? I'm still the same person. You leave that arrogance behind. Regardless if you are Latina/o or not, it's important that people see you as that person. The position allows you to influence policy. But the person you are can never change. You have to engage with people and speak openly and freely. You have to have the same rapport or people don't trust you. You cannot leave your skin. You have to be true to you. People respect that. Everything else is peripheral. People have to know that you are real, you are genuine, and that you have that passion. I get the respect that I give

people. People don't come here and demand things. I don't have to get confrontational very often."

For current and aspiring CEOs, Subject 2 discussed the importance of professional development and organizations to reinforce what he learned from his mentor. Subject 2 believes that networks and connections that he formed at AACC and ACCCA were helpful in meeting other Latina/os experiencing similar things he does:

"Latina/o CEOs search each other out. What's ironic is that we have similar personalities and we have similar passions to influence people of color. The difference between my mentor and me, I think I had it in me, but I had to find that. I quickly realized that mentorship helped me."

**Future and legacy.** Subject 2 believes the future of Latina/os in community college CEO positions is excellent. He believes that we are beginning to see real movement. Even though some might say it's not fast enough, it's more important to be deliberate rather than fast. Support by fellow Latina/os is also very important to Subject 2:

"A lot has to do with jealousy. What I have experienced when I got my doctorate and became an executive administrator, people would think I would forget them. That happens a lot. All you can do is don't take it personal. Second, let them know you are still who you are and that title or position does not change that."

Subject 2 self-examined his response for his legacy:

"I want to leave a legacy, well, that I have paved the path. Don't let an obstacle stop you. Find a way around it. If it takes a little longer, that's OK. Never give up on that dream! If it's not your dream it's OK. The worse thing you can do is be in a job you absolutely hate. The best think you can do is to be in a job or career that brings so much satisfaction. So my legacy I hope is that I was able to enhance student success through my example, my advice, my advocacy, and touching people's lives. That's the best thing you can do."

### Subject 3

Subject 3 could easily be the CEO of a large Fortune 500 company. He has the supreme qualities of a great leader of an organization: Highly skilled--yet approachable, intelligent--yet humble, and focused and organized--yet flexible. At the conclusion of the face-to-face interview the researcher deduces that if there were a boilerplate written for producing the consummate CEO, it would be designed with the skillsets Subject 3 possesses. He is the real-deal, the complete package.

Subject 3 was born in Enid, Oklahoma and raised by his grandparents, who were his biggest influence. They were hard working people who paid for Subject 3's Catholic school education. They sacrificed a lot and did certain things for him that were significant, but that he didn't realize at the time:

“When I was in elementary school they bought me a set of World Book Encyclopedia's. That was the computer of my day. I would spend hours reading through those and the neighborhood kids would come over to use them for book reports. Those were not cheap and my grandparents sacrificed for me. They never told me I would go to college, but they expected the best of me. My grandmother had 6 years of education and my grandfather had like 6 months. That was the key. I always know I would go to college.”

College was a very big experience for Subject 3. He was away from home and didn't do so well his first year. Ultimately, he realized that he was only hurting himself and wasting his life. When he returned to school he got high marks the rest of the way. Subject 3's view is that it's not easy to learn how to be a good student. When he was in high school he did not have to study much, but in college that was not acceptable. One turning point in Subject 3's life was when he was living in New York with his mother and stepfather:

“I was working the night shift in a factory. My foreman was a heroin addict and he would go shoot up in his locker. That was not what I wanted to do. He would offer it to

me, but I said no thanks. It was pretty prevalent in the day. Some of my friends did it, but I had the sense not to do it. The grounding that my grandparents gave me helped me with that. I didn't go down those paths. Those are the experiences that shaped me. It all goes back to my grandparents."

Subject 3's rise to a CEO position was nothing short of meteoric. He began his first Presidency in 1995, only 7 years after starting at the community colleges in the position of Director of Institutional Development. "When I received my doctorate I was set off on the tenure track future at the university level. However, chasing the money in grants and doing the studies in mental health was very depressing. Luckily someone told me about looking into community colleges". After obtaining his first community college administrator position Subject 3 quickly honed his craft and was good at what he did. As soon as that happened other opportunities presented themselves to him. "Once I proved I could do the job I started getting interim positions. I did an Interim Director of Student Development position, Interim Dean of Instruction, Interim Dean of Institutional Development, and I was able to parlay that into a Vice President position at another college". Subject 3's rapid rise was also a result of his positive thinking and belief in his skills. From the time Subject 3 started his first post at the community colleges he gave himself a timeline of 6 years to become a community college President:

"I realized I had the skillset to do what those managers were doing. I had the Doctorate, research experience, and analytical skills. So I just needed to learn the other management skills. I said what do they have that I do not? Every goal I set to achieve was achieved sooner than the timeline. Actually that might have hurt me some to move up so fast. That's the way it happened. I didn't start in the community college system until 1989, but by 95' I was a president."

Subject 3 recalled moments when he was mentored or when he served as a mentor to aspiring Latina/o CEOs or middle-level managers. "Everyone can recall when someone took him or her under their wing throughout the years. I've been fortunate to



have Latina/os and non-Latina/os alike mentor me”. Other positive experiences have included serving on campus committees for Latina/os or participating in ACCCA and NCCHC. Those were very instrumental to the development of Subject 3:

“At one of my community colleges we had a group of Latina/os--faculty, staff, and administrators--who met to discuss college issues. We advocated on behalf of Latina/os, took on Latina/o issues, hosted events and other activities. It was really neat to get involved with, to rub elbows at your college with those with similar goals. It turned out to be a professional development thing. It may have not been formal mentoring but it was. I was relatively new so I learned a lot from the senior members of the institution. They had a lot to offer. They allowed me to be a President one year, to be a leader. It was a great learning experience and opportunity.”

Conversely, Subject 3 is proud of mentoring aspiring and current Latina/o leaders. He has mentored inside and outside of his organizations. He identifies promising leaders and encourages them to work on a particular skill by sponsoring them to attend conferences, workshops, or by providing advice when needed. “I find it fulfilling when these aspiring leaders move forward and get the next job”. In order to hire more Latina/o executive leaders Subject 3 believes CEOs should press upon people and organizations that you want to hire qualified Latina/os. Ultimately, it’s up to colleges to make an effort to hire Latina/os and to level the playing field:

“I’m not sure if you can fully do that, but you must work against institutional barriers that skew the field. To improve the hiring of diverse candidates you should really scrutinize the process. Sometimes you have to fight. I’ve had toe-toe battles and I’ve had to take a stand in my hiring. You must broaden requirements because if you don’t you are going to continue to hire the non-diverse candidate. You still want to hire the best qualified, but you should broaden that definition. People want to be the gatekeepers and ultimately you get people who want clones of themselves. You have to watch against that. The perspective must be wider.”

Subject 3 spoke candidly about some of the other barriers or obstacles that have come to the forefront in his time as a CEO:

“Prejudice and discrimination still exist to this day. There’s a search going on in Northern California for a Chancellor. There are two finalists, a Caucasian guy who is a clone of the previous guy they had and a Latino who is very dynamic, an up and comer. I know a lot about this search. I know the Board is torn on whom to hire. Racism has reared its ugly head in my way of thinking because of a prominent businessman on the search committee stood up, and I know who he is, he’s very wealthy. He basically said that there is only one candidate right for the position. He was talking about the White candidate, as if a Latino can’t represent the community and get along with business leaders, the chamber of commerce.”

Subject 3 has seen many Latina/o counterparts burnout because people would not give them an opportunity. One of his colleagues shared one instance when an Academic Senate President told him “We’ll never take orders from a Mexican!” Subject 3 has had his share of racist experiences:

“When I left a former college I worked in I received a note, I’ll call it a love letter. The letter said good riddance, one less Mexican. You get stuff like that, crazy people who are biased. Thank goodness the majority of people are not like that. Many try to disguise it, but it happens. I used to teach a class called Chicano Psychology and I had students say they never experienced it. They really believe that. If you got them to analyze experiences they would see it as discrimination. It goes over their head or they are in denial. It happens frequently.”

**Future and legacy.** Subject 3 would like to think the future of Latina/o CEOs is rosy. However, he believes we have been losing ground in the community colleges even though the Latina/o community college student population continues to grow. Subject 3 believes there are fewer Latina/o CEOs than there were ten years ago and not a lot of people are paying attention to the declining numbers. His continued support of the NCCHC is one way to ensure the numbers grow. He believes that executive leadership is not for everyone:

“It’s hard to blame people for not choosing these jobs. When you have collective bargaining agreements, shared governance, crazy Board Members, you’re at the center of it. You have to have a strong constitution and identity and a willingness to take flack and

not let it bother you. It's not for everyone. It is much easier to take a faculty position and hide in the weeds. I understand why people don't want these jobs. I have seen a lot of progress, but we've also taken a step back."

When reflecting on his legacy Subject 3 quickly responds, "I don't think about my legacy. It's more about the group legacy. I'd like to see more Latina/o CEOs. I'd like to see more students become successful". Subject 3 hopes to create more opportunities and programs for Latina/o students and to help them progress in their lives:

"We have so much going on but I want to see greater success. Not the individual legacy, but for our group and young people, to see a greater standard of living. Improve income level, more prestigious jobs than our parents and grandparents had. Someone told me the community colleges are about developing the middle class. That should be our goal, to increase the middle class numbers for Latina/os. We don't want to see our children regress. Ultimately, I would like to see success among Latina/o students."

#### **Subject 4**

Subject 4 was the first female interviewed for this dissertation. From first-hand knowledge she is well respected at all of her former community colleges. Personally significant for the researcher was that Subject 4 was the President who interviewed me for my first fulltime community college position. Although the researcher had not seen Subject 4 in more than 8 years, my recollections of her were accurate: she was polished, intelligent, insightful, and classy--a lady in every sense of the word.

Subject 4 is the only person in this manuscript who was born outside of the US. She came to the US from Nicaragua in 1963 at the age of 12. This was a very critical period in the history of this country as the Civil Rights Act would soon be a transformational period in US history. Subject 4 believes the immigrant experience had a lot to do with who she is today. She also believes she would not have chosen the same path if she had been born in the US. Her father was a pharmacist and believed that his

five children could obtain an education by coming to this country. Therefore, he gave up his career in his 30s to come to America.

The immigrant experience and education was very definitive for Subject 4:

“It became very clear that education was the key for me. I had a very progressive grandmother who died just before I left Nicaragua. She was a journalist. She said to me that everything could be taken from you except what you learn—that always stays with you. What stays with you is a treasure and whatever happens, that can’t be taken from you. Financial, psychological, and economic circumstances can intervene, but what you knew, you knew. That was very important.”

Subject 4 believes her academic choices and her career in community colleges has been shaped by where she has been as a human being at that particular moment in time. She also firmly believes in taking chances when a door opens for new opportunities. The reason Subject 4 pursued a Bachelor’s Degree in Speech, Communication, and Speech Disorders is because she wanted to understand language acquisition, her own struggles, and her mother’s struggles:

“What really shaped that was my mother’s inability to adapt to this country and seeing her descend into this huge conflict, a psychological conflict, a physiological conflict, and emotional conflict. I never really saw my mother able to adjust so I became intrigued by culture shock.”

Upon completing her Master’s Degree and working for a time as the only Spanish-speaking therapist in her Seattle community, she realized she was not happy with her career. “I was a 25 year old therapist and there wasn’t anyone else to treat hundreds of people for horrific problems and there was only so much I could do”. Intervention came in the form of a colleague informing her that a university in Southern California was recruiting women and minorities to pursue their Doctorate Degrees. Subject 4’s husband believed it was a great opportunity for the family so they left their jobs in Seattle

and moved back to California. This is the reason Subject 4 ended up in education and discovered community colleges:

“In my Doctorate program we were exposed to various levels of education: K to 12, 4-year publics and privates, and community colleges. When I saw what community colleges could do, I thought that’s it. They helped immigrants, second language English learners, and people without high school diplomas. I just fell in love with community colleges. The particular person who introduced me to them, I still remember today. He has since passed on but he said to me that community colleges were an American invention and that they were unique and magnificent. He was absolutely right. That’s when I stopped wavering and I’ve spent 32 years in the system. I love it, but I couldn’t tell you this without first telling you of the experiences that got me to that point. Ultimately, it was not a straight path. The choices I made were not career oriented, but suited my personal need.”

Subject 4 first worked at the California State Chancellor’s Office in Sacramento, and then moved on to President positions at two different institutions. She has currently served as a Chancellor for almost 3 years. Some of her earliest experiences were influential in shaping who she is today:

“I remember I had written this policy for the Board of Governor’s and this older Caucasian male I worked with, and he meant well, told me I write really well. As a woman in her late 20s or early 30s I said to him I have actually read what all of you write and I write better than most of you. I don’t know where I got that from because I was probationary. He was surprised and told me he wanted to be my friend. I said that he had given me a backhanded compliment and why he thought I could not write. I ended up being the Dean over that division many years later.”

After working at the State Chancellor’s Office for 18 years, Subject 4 knew she wanted to work on a campus:

“I knew after being at the Chancellor’s Office for 18 years that I wanted to be at a campus. I loved what happened on the campuses. I was tired of policy and legislation. I had such joy when I was on campus. Did I say I wanted to be a college President? No, I just wanted to be on a campus.”

Once on the college campus the researcher asked Subject 4 what were some of the mentoring opportunities she was part of, and the challenges or obstacles she faced or that aspiring Latina/o CEOs might face. She believes that most of the mentoring offered to her was by colleagues. It was never about her being taken under someone's wing. The mentoring that one considers traditional was not available to her. Subject 4 candidly explains:

“The mentoring was the group who was struggling together and peer mentoring by those who shared similar experiences. I don't remember anyone other than my colleagues or peers who said I'm going to take you under my wing. The mentoring didn't make sense to me and the people who wanted to mentor me were the people I did not want to emulate.”

Even though Subject 4 did not have a formal mentor she provides mentoring whenever she can. “I will never say no to a dissertation, I know how tough it is”. She also has a predisposition to mentor fellow Latina/os and students but will help anyone with aspirations of learning. Subject 4 recalls mentoring three aspiring CEOs at her previous college, a Latina, an African American, and a Caucasian:

“I supported them to enroll in the Doctorate program near our former college. One of them was recently hired as a Vice President of Student Services at a Northern California college. These women have all advanced. It is amazingly gratifying to see the fruits of that mentorship. I am also a presenter at the leadership institutes like AACC. It has been a good experience. I must say that sometimes it takes a little bit of time. Sometimes when you plant a seed it takes some time. Latina/os who are poised to enter leadership do it early. I have been fortunate that I have mentored a lot of folks. More than anything, I think I've supported a lot of individuals. When they tell you how influential you've been, it is very humbling.”

Subject 4 believes that Latina/os who aspire to become CEOs should not do so just for the sake of it. She feels it is a thankless position, stressful, and consumes more of one's life than you would expect. The position has to mean something and you cannot do

it for the title or financial possibilities, otherwise she believes you will be perpetually mediocre.

Other topics that Subject 4 took on are gender and race. She feels it is important that people know who she is and believes it's virtually impossible to leave your life at the door:

“I don't think there's anybody in this district who doesn't know what my granddaughter's name is because I love her and she inspires me. At the beginning of my career I struggled with that because there's a fine line. After a while you take the whole package. At one of my first hires I said I'm not the traditional CEO, I'm not 5 foot, 10 inches. I'm not male. I'm 5 foot, 2 inches but I can do the job. At this district I replaced a Latina who I consider a wonderful woman. She is someone I respected and who I still respect. But there was an incident, bad judgment on her part. The news media decided to crucify and destroy her and the district in the process. One of the things that happened in my interview was when one question was asked. I remember them saying, tell us, you're Latina—and my predecessor was also Central American—tell us how you are not like the former Chancellor. I answered, you know, that's an interesting question. If the prior Chancellor had been John Wayne and I'm Kirk Douglas, would you have asked me that question? That's kind of an outrageous question. You really need to look at who I am and what I bring to this situation and determine if I am a good fit. I do consider myself a gentle person but stuff like that gets me. I have been very fortunate to have been blessed with a level of wit so I can respond in a dignified manner, but I can teach while I am doing that.”

Subject 4 also talked about possible barriers that aspiring CEOs must face as they climb the administrative ranks and how they must cultivate a network of their peers to have success:

“The greatest barriers to hiring CEOs who look like the students we serve are the hiring committees. The faculty controls most committees so the CEO has to go to extraordinary lengths to have everyone go through the proper process. You have to influence the hiring committees, the job descriptions, and the screening questions. The notion that we have diversity in the hiring committees is not true. We have to ensure that we overcome the barriers that are institutionalized. It still has to be a conscious advocacy effort that is led by people—Trustees and community advocates—or it will not happen on its own. Preparation is another method that aspiring CEOs can use to overcome barriers. You

must learn skills for the CEO, but there is little information for Latina/o or minority CEOs that says this is how it plays out on your campus.”

Subject 4 discusses how a network of peers will be a valuable source of information and support as middle-level managers progress in their administrative careers. “In any occupation if you have someone who has been there—done that, that’s great help. With us there is a handful only. There are Latina/o Trustees who get together on a regular basis. It doesn’t have to be Latina/os, but any CEO”.

**Future and legacy.** Subject 4 is glad that community colleges are being recognized as elite institutions of higher learning:

“I am evangelical about what we do. I remember talking to an administrator from an elite university in Northern California and the gentleman was talking about the role of the university and how it has existed forever. I said that was precisely why they were not going to survive. He was furious and said community colleges just prepare technicians. And I said the notion of the Ph.D., what does it prepare you for—work? If it doesn’t, why offer it? This reminds me of Wizard of Oz thinkology. I was chairing the meeting so I was telling him that. I said do you not offer degrees so people can have a career? I thought the exchange was humorous, but telling.”

Subject 4 hopes to be associated with the legacy of elevating the value of the community college movement and what it stands for to a myriad of people:

“I think if people link me to immigrant and non-native English speakers, it’s something I want to be associated with; and that I loved all students. They could be purple for all I cared. That would be a wonderful legacy that says I’m a positivist. That I believe in the future. Another legacy I would like to leave is authenticity. You don’t have to fit the mold. We all evolve or you won’t be effective or happy, if it takes five to ten years here and there, and with a little patience.”

## **Subject 5**

Subject 5 greets the researcher with a welcoming handshake and professional demeanor. From the onset of the interview, she seems highly competent, an over achiever, and committed to student success. Subject 5 is a leader who could serve as a



model mentor for Latina/o students hoping to pursue a career in community college teaching and administration.

Subject 5 was born in Brooklyn, New York but moved around a lot as her father served in the US Marine Corps. As the first-born of four children, she was immediately placed in a position of leadership, which was also her first opportunity to create followers. As a result of moving around so much Subject 5 had to adapt, to blend in, meet new people, and learn where she fit into the culture of her environment.

Professionally, Subject 5s life has been an unfolding of opportunities that she has embraced and that people laid before her. “I probably would not have done certain things if I had not been encouraged by the people who I worked for and who encouraged me.” Her foray into community college education was not intentional, but by the recommendation of a friend:

“When I graduated with my Masters Degree one of my cohort peers encouraged me to apply for a job as a counselor in a Southern California college. That was my first job—even though it was replacing someone on sabbatical--and I’ve been in the system since 1989.”

Subject 5 held a number of positions as Dean, then at a district office. She was also a Director for Financial Aid then was asked to fill a Vice President position for one year. In her tenure as Vice President she believed she was not settling into her role, even though that’s what she thought she wanted to do. “Having worked both on campus and in district roles, I realized that I liked working at the policy level and being connected with several colleges and not just connected to one.”

Early in her career Subject 5 knew the importance of having a mentor and mentoring others in order to be successful, reach her career goals, inspire others, and to

overcome the challenges and obstacles she might face in her ascent to executive administrative positions:

“I did have a mentor early on, from my time at the State Chancellor’s Office. It started informally. It became more formal when my boss sat me down in her chair and said where do you want to be five years from now? Nobody had ever asked me that, to be intentional. Never to be short on words, I said I want to be a middle-level administrator at a college. So she said she would help me get there. What that meant was that I could not be in that office for more than five years if I wanted to get back to a college campus.”

Subject 5 also spoke about the importance of mentoring others and being available, particularly to Latina/os who are students and middle-level administrators:

“I’m in a unique position because I teach in two graduate leadership programs. I really am in a position to influence aspiring administrators. As I work with graduate students my influence is to get them to pursue their Doctorate Degrees because it is my belief that a Master’s Degree is not enough anymore.”

Subject 5 is adamant about being able to give back to individuals and organizations she supports. She counsels mentees, formally and informally, to ensure that their needs are met professionally and academically. It is not uncommon for Subject 5 to Skype with a mentee or to meet for lunch. Further, she has participated as a panelist at conferences, particularly for those of women of color. Ultimately, Subject 5 is fervent in her belief that mentorship is important to her. “Never say no to someone or to activities because you never know where that will take you and especially if they are persons of color. It is important to continue to encourage.”

Subject 5 was very insightful in her discourse about how she has overcome obstacles and barriers, and how aspiring administrators can use specific tools to do the same:

“There is no formal training on how to be a Dean. You learn along the way. Learning how to navigate the challenges, among various stakeholder groups. For example, being a

Latina or person of color and the only one around the meeting table when I started was a challenge. It makes you mindful of what you talk about; your platform, and what issues you bring to the table. That can be a challenge. Other challenges I experienced were having a perceived, that I'm too young for my jobs. People say I have a youthful experience so they don't believe I have 20 plus years progressive leadership experience. This might sound weird, but being short is also a problem. When you don't have the stature or the imposing frame around a table of imposing people, sometimes that's a challenge, a personal challenge. Those are just some of things, going through them and then stumble."

Subject 5 discussed how fear might be an obstacle to overcome. Mostly she alludes to the fear that hiring committees have when hiring an unknown commodity, particularly a Latina/o:

"There is fear of change. I see a lot of hesitancy of making the final call to a Latina/o CEO. These barriers exist because you are dealing with Board of Trustees and faculty who are not representative of the Latina/o community. We are making the transition, but the majority of faculty and managers are still White. That's something that will have to change and hiring committees will have to look like the people they are hiring."

Subject 5 ultimately believes there are organizational barriers and perception barriers, but there are also internal barriers for people themselves. She alludes to a lack of confidence for people to make the jump to CEO positions:

"I know that me personally, I have that fear. Am I able to make that jump? Do I have the skills required to be a CEO? Do I have fear because I am Latina? I think my fear is that I think I don't have the strengths to do those particular skills, to go and fundraise and to navigate the political arena. Is that because I am Latina and I haven't had the chance to do those things? Maybe so--maybe they are related. I certainly don't come from a political family. I certainly don't come from family who is aware of the higher education process. I don't have that as an excuse now. I can only attribute it to my own fear of doing those particular jobs."

To encourage a future generation of Latina/os who assume executive administrative positions Subject 5 believes that lower level positions must be filled. Latina/os must be recruited through journals, organizations, and by word-of-mouth.

Subject 5 believes that individuals must place themselves in the position to pursue certain assignments. “When I came to this district I had a lay of the colleges and their strengths. I recruited myself for that district so I got a part time job as a counselor in order to create a set of knowledge and skills in order to make the transition to the district job.”

**Future and legacy.** Subject 5 believes the future for Latina/os in CEO-level positions is very bright. As more faculty members become Deans or middle-level managers it is imperative to support their professional development and attainment of Doctorate Degrees. “I think we need to encourage them to go into executive positions and give them support and encouragement.”

Subject 5 hopes her legacy is about cultivating leaders and encouraging people to take the next step in their career:

“It really is about getting people to see their promise. It’s giving people the encouragement and support and tools and telling them you can do this, let me help you with your resume, let me help you with this interview, let me help you get through this educational program, let me tell you about ACCCA, let me tell you about the Future Leader’s Institute, let me share my experiences so that you can weigh those considerations for yourself to make yourself a better person and to help you change our community in a positive way. It’s always helping people to take that next step. I think that’s my legacy.”

## **Subject 6**

Subject 6 is as smooth as they come. The researcher was immediately drawn to his ability to make one feel at ease in his presence. He’s like the hip uncle that everyone wants to invite to the family holiday party. Subject 6 is a leader who knows the importance of being involved with the college constituency as well as attending community functions in order to garner support for the next college project. It has been said that going to the School of Hard Knocks gets you ready for the hustlers and

colleagues that want to take advantage of you, be it personally or professionally. It's that high street smart IQ, combined with his professional experiences and education, that has helped Subject 6 meander through a career filled with collaborating and negotiating with Academic Senates, Unions, and Board of Trustees. Ultimately those experiences have brought some grandiose accomplishments.

Subject 6 was born in Colorado to a single mother--with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education--who raised five children on welfare. His father, a World War II veteran, had an 11<sup>th</sup> grade education. The vestiges of the war were hard on Subject 6's father and as result he turned to alcohol and was subsequently committed to a state hospital. Subject 6 introspectively notes, "He never really recovered". Subject 6's mother had a goal for her children, to finish high school. Even though he lived in the projects going to school was always an experience. Through elementary and middle school he studied with children from similar socio-economic backgrounds. However, that changed in high school:

"I went to high school in the Southside of town. That school was on the outskirts of the city. The projects were also on the Southside and they came together at the high school. We were going to school with the kids of the doctors and lawyers, the project kids, and everyone else. We began to see the differences, but we persevered. I had no other option. My mother would kick my ass if I thought of dropping out."

The course of Subject 6's life changed in 11<sup>th</sup> grade when he was recruited for the Upward Bound Program in 1966. The local college had received a grant to help potential high school dropouts persist in the academic setting. Upward Bound really demonstrated to Subject 6 that he could go to college. It showed him a new potential in life because it helped transition him to college. Ultimately, Upward Bound gave him the possibilities because it helped introduce him to the Future Teachers of America.

The birth of Subject 6's teaching career was during his undergraduate studies, where he was part of the Teacher's Corps. The university he was attending subsidized his graduate work while working with a master teacher. After 2 years of studies and learning the skills of a teacher he became a Graduate Assistant. Ironically, the college received an Upward Bound grant of their own. Armed with the degree, the life experience, and student experience in the program, he was asked to be the Director of the grant, his first administrative position.

After 3 years in this position he was having a conversation one day with a seasoned professor when he realized he wanted to pursue his doctorate degree:

"I was talking to the Department Chair of the education department. He wore a bow tie, smoked a pipe, and was very distant, cold. I felt like a lowly student and I remember thinking to myself that I can do that. That was the first time I knew I could be a college professor and so I enrolled in a doctorate program in my home state. After completing the program, I was hired at a university in the Midwest where I was Assistant Director and Professor of Chicano Studies. There weren't too many Chicanos in Wisconsin at the time. We would recruit out of Chicago and that's where I first heard of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, didn't care for each other much."

After teaching at the university level and spending about 10 years working with private schools and organizations Subject 6 went to work for a technical school in Oakland, California where he was the Executive Director of an office skills center. That is how Subject 6 began his tenure in the community college system. After 2 years he went back to Colorado and became a Dean at a community college. "That's when I decided I wanted to become a college president. I was looking for mentors but there wasn't any at the time. I had some people give me advice. That's when I became aware of the Fellow's Program for NCCCHC." After the Dean position in Denver he went to

Tucson, Arizona as a Vice President for 5 years. That's when he began searching for President positions:

“In Tucson they had a reservation and they were looking to open a community college but couldn't find any Native Americans, but I was encouraged to apply and I was offered the position as the founding President. Ultimately I left because they wanted a Native American, which I agreed with.”

Subject 6 has been an executive-level administrator for 19 years. What attracted him to the community colleges is their philosophy, the open access mission, their functionality, the moral values people have. “People have a right to succeed rather than a right to fail. Universities have a job to screen people out.” As an experienced leader Subject 6 offers sage advice in the mentoring techniques, preparation, obstacles or challenges Latina/os must develop and overcome to become effective CEOs. First he talks about the aspirations of middle-level managers. “If you're doing it for the money or prestige it's not right. These jobs are stressful so enjoy what you do. No 2 days are alike and there are always challenges. You push yourself to go through all types of arenas that you know you would not go through.”

Preparation is also a key trait for aspiring leaders, especially if they are to overcome barriers and challenges. As the current President of the NCCHC, Subject 6 believes that training and mentoring programs help with personal and professional development. “There's a whole training program to prepare you with the skill sets needed for management positions. You go through a cohort of about 15 people and we bring in experts in certain areas you must be aware of.” Subject 6 also preaches the importance of learning the craft, managing collegially, and having effective interpersonal skills:

“You have to have people skills. If you are going to sit in your office and play God that won’t work. In the past, President’s were viewed as being internal or external. I found that in today’s environment you must do both. You have to monitor what’s going on. When you’re in the community you are the bridge between the community and the college. If you see opportunities for partnerships you must capitalize on that. Presidents have to have both sets of skills as the CEO. You can’t afford not to have both.”

Mentorship is also high on Subject 6’s list of tools for preparation and overcoming obstacles:

“Ever since I’ve been part of NCCHC I’ve taken on a mentee. I’ve had about ten or so and we set up a training plan. We have a formal program. We set up an agreement with meetings, goals, timeframe, and what are the steps to get there. I’m still working with someone who developed a ten-year plan. I talked to her last night. She is interviewing for an interim Presidency in Oregon. I’ve had people from all parts of the country. This particular mentee was originally a Coordinator. She came to me and said I want to advance but don’t know how. I got her into the fellow’s program and we mapped out her path. Sometimes you have to move out to move up. That’s the reality of it. Women have a hard time with it because of family obligations. Every once in awhile you hear about people who’ve moved up within their organization, but that’s rare.”

**Future and legacy.** Subject 6 believes the future of Latina/os in CEO roles is bright and has no limits, particularly with the growth expanding to territories that traditionally have not had many Latina/os:

“There are Latina/os in places you’ve never seen. Many of the places in the South or Northeast don’t know how to deal with Latina/os. If you are a Latina or Latino and you’re preparing yourself there a lot of opportunities out there. Many places all over: the Midwest, Chicago, or Florida. I think the future is bright, but you have to prepare yourself.”

Subject 6 is quick to point out that he never thought about legacies:

“I don’t do this job for legacy. I’m not here to create a monument for myself. I’m here for the students. I don’t do it for accolades. If you work hard the accolades will come. Some people in this position want to be in the front. If I have a legacy that was already created it was as the founding President of the Native American community college. We founded that college from nothing and now it’s fully accredited. You recognize you’re only here for a certain time as administrators. That’s why faculty has this dissonance



with administrators because they are at campuses for a long time. That's why you have to have the skill sets to work with people. Legacy is always limited. Unless you are going to be in history books somewhere I don't worry about legacy. My family and the people I help will be the legacy. It's not about buildings, plaques, or awards. It's about how I am remembered by my family or some doctorate student, if it helps pass on the knowledge to others. That's why we get in this type of work, to help people and see them grow. Time will pass, generations will come, and we're here a short time. So I try not to think in those terms. I want to do a good job and help students. Coming from the projects and a single mother I once did a presentation called, 'From the Projects to the Presidency'. Many people come from the projects and don't see the role models. It's up to us, you and me, to help them see the possibilities and provide the inspiration. That's when you mentor. You don't turn people down. That's why when you called I said yes."

### **Subject 7**

Subject 7 greeted the researcher with a smile and warm welcome. Our last interaction was 5 years earlier when the researcher was about to transition from Subject 7's College in Orange County to a community college in Los Angeles. The best way to describe Subject 7 is that she makes herself available to her managers, cares for her constituency, is quick to mentor, and is very loyal to her organization as evidenced by the long tenures in her current and previous positions. The researcher can recall Subject 7 saying to him many years earlier, "If you ever need anything or advice please don't hesitate to contact me". Those warm words of wisdom left a permanent imprint of the importance of always making ourselves available as mentors.

Subject 7 was born in San Luis Obispo to a working mother and college-educated father who served in World War II and took advantage of the GI Bill. In Subject 7's family going to college was expected. The language around the household was when you go to college, not if you go to college. Subject 7 was the dutiful daughter, did extremely well in school, and continued her education as an undergraduate. What was never

explained to Subject 7 was graduate school. Not until working her second position in a community college did Subject 7 learn about graduate school:

“It was my life-long mentor who told me you have to go back to school. I was surprised and thought to myself why do I have to go back to school. I thought I was finished because I had my Bachelor’s Degree. My mentor encouraged me to go back to school and get my graduate degree. So having a mentor was key for me in terms of an education and meeting other Latinos in the professional ranks.”

Subject 7 has been an administrator--Dean, Vice President, and President--for 28 years. Her first employment experience at a community college was as a Student Center Coordinator, a job she saw advertised in a local newspaper. Subject 7 believes that working in community colleges happened by chance and feels that it chose her more than being a choice of her own:

“I was working as a student community worker for LA County Schools with young people who were not continuing in school. They were going to a juvenile camp or being released from a juvenile camp. They had unstable homes or unstableness about them. I loved doing it. I’ve written about it, but it was also very difficult. You’re talking about gang activity and people dying over the weekend. Things happening that made it hard to be in the trenches. I still wanted to work with young people and make a change so after working at the county for a few years I started to look.”

The realization to become an executive administrator did not happen with one moment or incident. Subject 7 believes that there was a collection of moments that made her think that she was suited for higher levels of responsibility:

“The collection of moments for me is when you see executives, Vice Presidents, and above, and how they operate and how they make decisions and you have that thought in your mind and say I could do that, I could do that job and then it gets reinforced by a mentor who says you can do that. For me, it was by observation and what was around me, and beginning to have the thought that I could do that job.”

The fact that mentors helped guide her in becoming prepared for the next step was also a huge factor in acquiring the skills needed to obtain subsequent promotions:

“I had a President one time who took me out of my assignment as Director of Student Affairs and moved me to go work in the Instruction Office for one year. That really helped me see another side of the campus and work with the Vice President quite closely. Years later I found the box with all of my work and I thought to myself, they really got a lot of work out of me.”

Subject 7 discussed the importance of mentoring aspiring executive administrators through individual connections or organizations. She believes that mentorship happens both ways, formally and informally. Formally, like in the ACCCA program and informally through avenues such as being a guest speaker in university doctorate programs or professional conferences. Mentorship for Subject 7 is personally fulfilling and sometimes also comes without ones knowledge:

“What’s so golden is that sometimes you don’t know. When people tell you, I remember the time when you...and you don’t remember the conversation at all. The most recent was one of the mentees from the ACCCA program who wrote me a note. She had gotten a new job. I had forgotten about advice I had given her and she had taken me up on it. She was trying to decide whether she was going to move or not. I told her when you get to be an executive it can be rather lonely so you might want to look at the place where you can build community or where you have a family or a college roommate. Go to a place where you can be supported. Ultimately she ended up at a place with family so she was very happy with her move. Quite honestly I had forgotten about that.”

Like many of her peers in the manuscript, Subject 7 has anecdotes to some of the barriers or obstacles she has faced throughout her career. She speaks very proudly of the fact that she is a senior President within her institution, but even then she must contend with the old-boys club:

“My Chancellor, two Vice Chancellors, and the other college President are all men. When I go to a cabinet meeting I’m still the only woman in the room. That’s been evident my entire career. Don’t be surprised if you are the only woman or Latina in the room. You get used to being the only one and having to blaze your own trail. So I reach out to other college Presidents who I have something in common with and we try to support each other.”

Another barrier that Subject 7 believes impedes the progression of Latina/o CEOs are the Board of Trustees. They are the ones who hire CEOs so their decisions have long-lasting effects on an institution. Subject 7 was very forthright about the influence of the Board on hiring CEOs:

“I’m not sure how much Boards take Latina/os seriously. If you look at Board of Trustees, they are not usually filled with Latina/os and they are ultimately making the decision for the CEO position. I’ve seen situations where the nod for the CEO goes to the non-Latino. It’s the Board who is making those decisions. So it’s important to look at the make-up of those Boards. This may be unfair to say, but it’s like you have to be good at everything because they are looking for a reason not to hire you. Maybe that’s unfair to say, but I’m going to say it anyway.”

**Future and legacy.** Subject 7 believes the future of Latina/os in administrative positions is bright and that an aspiring leader must be able to show they have the right stuff, that you have the experience and education. Latina/os must also demonstrate they can serve as role models, and that they can speak to parents and community groups. “I think that community colleges as being access institutions, open access institutions and people are realizing that we are an inclusive institution and our administrative ranks need to reflect that as well”.

When I ask Subject 7 about her legacy she smiled and was gripped by quiet thought:

“It’s not about me. It’s about the students. My legacy is going to be about the people I’ve hired. My legacy will be the faculty I’ve hired, faculty who I’ve hired in the past eight years is going to be the faculty for the next 20 to 30 years. They are going to be the ones who focus on students that reflect our diversity. That contributes to the climate of the institution. I want to be about the students.”

**Subject 8**

Subject 8 transmitted the characteristics of the consummate professional, well versed in the intricacies of the community college system and a solid presence within her organization. Her career, built on experiences as an executive administrator within the human resources umbrella has equipped her with these qualities. Becoming a polished leader is many times a product of having to deal with innumerable aspects of personnel issues, which include faculty grievances, administrative reprimands, and staff disciplinary issues. It is some of these elements that helps Subject 8 bring a unique perspective to this manuscript.

Subject 8 was born in Santa Antonio, Texas, the second oldest of four children. She is the first in her family to obtain a Bachelor's Degree. One of her siblings is also a professional who obtained his AA Degree and her other two siblings are blue-collar workers. From an early age Subject 8 possessed a fire that burned deep within. She was always competitive and cognizant of the fact that she wanted to attend college. She wanted to do something grand as her internal aspirations pushed her forward as she took on every academic and professional challenge along the way. Throughout this journey she was observant of her environment and would watch mentors from afar, people who she admired and wanted to emulate. Quiet observation and reflection would allow her to visualize her goals. Therefore, from the beginning Subject 8 was a goal-setter and would challenge herself to greatness.

Subject 8 has been an executive community college administrator for 6 years. She began her career as a part time ESL instructor 23 years ago and then began her ascent to higher-level positions. Her first administrative position was as a faculty coordinator

then she became the first Affirmative Action Officer at her college in 1990. At the time Affirmative Action was a very important issue within the community college system as Senate Bill 1725 had just passed and put a major focus on community colleges. It was in this position that Subject 8 cemented her path in the community college system.

Subject 8's choice to enter the community college system was two-fold. First, she has always been a big dreamer. "You play out the trajectory in your mind, but by the same token the other side is a progressive track where you take one step at a time and you realize that you have to prepare yourself along the way." Second, even though she had these aspirations, Subject 2 knew that she had to develop the skills to reach her goal. "Getting there was determinant on having the skills and confidence to get there, to take the big step."

Subject 8 feels she was very fortunate to have had a good mentor who she could learn from indirectly, but also believes there are other factors that have contributed to shaping her career:

"I'm kind of an odd duck in that regard. I never joined a mentor program. Maybe my mentor, and I kind of mentioned him earlier, is the person I worked for. I would watch him and how he made decisions and handled things. Periodically I would go and say to him, what does the law say on this? It was that kind of thing. But I never said to him I want you to be my mentor or he never said to me I want to mentor you. I have never had a formal mentoring relationship because I'm an independent spirit, which is not necessarily good."

Preparation is also a critical trait for Subject 8. She feels that if you are the complete package, if you have the experience, the gravitas, the ability to work with constituency groups, and you've got an excellent grasp of the issues going on in community colleges, you have an excellent chance to climb the administrative ranks.

Fear of failure is also a theme that Subject 8 touches upon. “It’s the fear that we don’t have what it takes to get the job done.” She touches upon that fear with transparency:

“You have to overcome that fear of taking the next step. Sometimes I think I need to be one hundred percent ready to take on the next role or higher position. That’s one of the reasons I would not take on that position with higher responsibility, especially when I was raising a family. Balancing my focus with family and work. Once my children were in college I could focus on my career. Those are some of the personal issues I had to deal with. What you realize is nobody has all the answers; even if you’re a CEO nobody ever has every answer. Getting beyond your fears and being confident in yourself to make that next move is important.”

Professional development and mentoring have been a big part of Subject 8’s career. She has been involved in ACCCA’s Administrator 101 program:

“I designed, developed, and coordinated the Administrator 101 program about 12 years ago. It’s a professional development program that occurs once per year for five days. I think that I have not only helped to facilitate the careers of individuals through that program, but I have inspired folks to become higher-level administrators and have given them technical skills they need to have more confidence in their own skills. I currently have an individual working for me in an associate position. I’m mentoring her. I know her goal is to move up. Currently she works under me and I mentor her. I imagine that within another year or two she will be applying to a position at that level. Ultimately you know that you have influenced the career of an aspiring administrator when you see people achieve their goals. That’s really what it’s all about for us as mentors. Our job is to help people achieve their goals and be promotable. We have to let go of that notion that you don’t want them to leave. No, our job is to help them, to mentor, to help them move on, to accomplish themselves personally and professionally. I welcome folks being successful in that regard and helping them to move on. Allowing people to grow and to move on is a place we need to look at. I’ve seen folks with my colleagues around and they say, oh no that person is leaving. They should be happy for that person because that’s really what we should be about, helping people grow.”

Subject 8 does not believe that ethnicity played a role in holding her back for executive administrative positions. On the contrary, she was very strategic about where she would apply and if the college seemed like the correct fit. However, she does discuss a time when her ethnicity was the wrong one:

“The one time I did not get the job was because I was not the right ethnicity. There was a White person, an African-American, and myself. One person on the Board was an African-American and she wanted to hire an African-American. In the final analysis it was politics. In community colleges it’s the reality of the industry we work in, politics. If you make it into the final interview you are obviously qualified. It’s always going to be who fits the need best. Who’s the better fit at that point and of course, politics will be involved.”

**Future and legacy.** Subject 8 believes that Latina/os are in a wonderful position to assume leadership roles within the community college system, but they have to prepare themselves effectively. She goes on to succinctly convey her goal for the legacy she would like to leave:

“I think I want to be seen as someone who was fair, straightforward, and helped to create a very functional institution because one of things that creates a dysfunctional institution is poor leadership and poor management. If we don’t take care of our business and manage our personnel effectively the institution is not going to meet their goals and will be dysfunctional, with low morale, and things not being achieved. It leads to a lot of negative outcomes. I think here we are on top of the issues and we hold people accountable, and while they do not like being held accountable nobody can say you are not being fair and nobody can say we are treating them capriciously or in an unjust manner. I think I just want to be known as someone who was fair and created a rock solid, functional institution.”

### **Responses to the Research Questions and Findings**

This section presents the primary thematic categories that emerged from the face-to-face interviews. First, the researcher presents the thematic categories holistically, which includes subject commentary. Second, the researcher presents the findings in a clinical manner. This is accomplished by presenting the findings as they related to each research question and supported by their correlation to primary interview questions. A table is included, highlighting the three most frequently discussed topics.



**Mentoring.** Mentoring was a primary topic of discussion for all eight subjects in this dissertation. The primary reason was that mentoring was included as a major topic of discussion of the interview questions. Overwhelmingly, Subject's 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 spoke of the importance of serving as a mentor, having been mentored, or involvement in a professional development program or organization. Subject's 1, 4, and 8 did not eschew mentoring and spoke of the value and importance of it, of having served as mentors for others, but they did not have particular instances when they had a formal mentor. In support of the value of mentoring, the eight subjects spoke of building networks and solid professional relationships in order to increase their support groups, to reinforce their preparation and to strengthen their vitae.

Subject 1 did not believe in a top-down mentoring approach, but instead by dialoguing with his peers. Most of his mutual mentor-like experiences involved discourse with counterparts going through similar experiences and establishing interpersonal skills in the form of relationships. "It behooves one to acquire good people skills to be an effective manager. Further, in order to recruit aspiring Latina/o faculty we should contact people at local universities and ask them if they know good Latina/os who might make good candidates."

Subject 2 has had excellent mentor and mentee experiences that he found beneficial to his development and to those who have followed him. "The relationships I have had helped to empower, to facilitate, and to ensure obstacles are minimized as much as possible. I have been a President for only 18 months, but Latina/o leaders network quickly; you search each other out for support."

Subject 3's take on the power of mentors, networks and professional relationships included a perspective of a potential job he was encouraged to apply for. "One time I got recruited by a person who's a good friend of mine. I knew someone else would get the position so I did not apply. He said I should apply, but after all was said and done it turned out I was right. At least having this contact and network gave me the inside track on applying for the position." Subject 3 goes on to speak of his positive mentoring experiences through professional organizations. "ACCCA and NCCHC had a leadership program that I was selected for in 1993. That was great because I got to meet a lot of mentors from around the country who I still consider great sources."

Similar to Subject 1, Subject 4 never had a formal mentor or anyone who she turned to for support, but was a firm believer in assisting aspiring administrators who reached out to her for advice or direction. However, she did believe that the most effective path to opportunities "is your network of other Latina/os and to provide support those who ask of you."

Subject 5 enjoys being able to see students who she mentors in a situation "where they can be successful so that they can reach that next step. That's what they did for me so I do that in return. When they seek you out always say yes." She goes on to extol the importance of mentors and formal training. "I have participated in a number of leadership programs and institutes that have given me administrative experiences that I had not been trained in. So ultimately the training and mentorship is very important."

Subject 6 believes mentors should have certain skills but also be available to provide support.

"We have to have people skills, good people skills. Connections and word of mouth helps. We call each other about colleges and potential candidates. I continually push

administrators who I have a formal mentoring relationship with. We email back and forth, I encourage, and provide feedback. It's not always about moving up, but sometimes it's about professional situations."

Subject 7 views mentorship as important even if it is done informally via a phone conversation or email.

"I've had about four women in about 8 years who have wanted to talk about their resume or their next career move. They just wanted advice. I tell them what I see about the possibilities in the future or what they bring to the table. I put myself out there and make sure to connect with the ones who reach out to me."

Subject 8 mirrored Subject 4 in that she never had a formal mentor relationship where she sought someone out or vice versa, but she observed her immediate supervisor. He was someone she respected so she analyzed his work and performance. She emphasized the value of "socializing with people and joining organizations like ACCCA, where you get thrown into a realm of other administrators you get to know you and can serve as mentors. Build those relationships."

**Experiences: education, employment, and familial.** Familial and employment experiences were factors in shaping the careers of all eight subjects in this dissertation. There was a consensus amongst these leaders that family was a major factor in shaping their professional development and perceptions about education. Subject 1 spoke fondly of his parent's influence on him and his siblings. His employment experiences were and continue to be enriched because of the key connections he has made with numerous colleagues throughout the years.

Subject 2's insightful anecdotes of his parents and grandparents serve as a reminder to the influence they had on his personal and career development, especially now that he leads the college where he was also a student and that is in the town where he

was raised. Because the college is in such a small community he can witness first-hand how many of the students make similar connections between family and the importance of education.

The influence that Subject 3's grandparents had on his academic development was crucial in instilling a need to better himself through education. Even though he was a good student throughout high school, Subject 3 asserted that he didn't know how to study or be a good student--which is indicative for almost all students--but that he knew that education was the key to his future. Once he started working within the community college system Subject 3 was aware that his performance, what he learned, and how fast he learned it would be keys to his success and to ultimately help him reach a community college presidency.

Subject 4's family and educational experiences helped to complement each other. First, her father left his career and native country in order for Subject 4 and her siblings to better their lives through education and the American Dream. Second, her experiences as a second language English learner and her mother's own difficulties with assimilation influenced many of her academic choices. Ultimately, her connections with family and one of her professors in the doctoral program she attended helped to shape the career choice she made.

Subject 5's experiences as a child of a military parent helped in her early development as a leader. Those beginnings helped her transfer these skills to her career, which has included spending time as an executive-level manager on college campuses and district offices. She has used these experiences to reinforce her skills and abilities in

her role as professor in various educational and leadership development programs at universities in Northern California.

Subject 6 believes that his earliest education experiences were keys to his professional development. From his mother's insistence on completing a high school diploma, to his exposure in Upward Bound programs, he believes these experiences shaped his career choice, first as a teacher then as an administrator, and allowed him to form a career path. His participation in these programs shaped his views on education but also helped him to advocate for the program and for aspiring CEOs.

Unlike most of her peers in this manuscript, Subject 7 had a parent who was a college graduate. This set the tone for the expectation that obtaining a postsecondary education was a given and subsequently became part of the household dialogue. Once she commenced her career in community colleges, a long-term mentor encouraged her to continue to pursue advanced degrees in order to progress her career.

Subject 8 was the only one in her family to obtain an undergraduate and graduate degree. She alluded to having a rich cultural background even though they were not financially wealthy. Her employment experiences have been key in her development as a leader especially because she has had an inside perspective to manager, staff, and faculty issues as an executive leader in human resources. This background has given her keen insight into being an effective employee and successful team player.

**Ethnicity.** Ethnicity, including the perceptions of race or gender placed on them was also a primary theme of discussion for the eight subjects in this dissertation. Some of the subjects believed that their ethnicity was not a factor throughout their career, but others alluded to the reality that racism had reared its ugly head on many occasions.

Gender, and especially the perceptions of being a female Latina, was a topic that I hoped would not be perfunctory, especially for the four female subjects who participated.

Subject 1 mentioned still experiencing subtle forms of racism, particularly when he goes into the community where most of the members of the Rotary Clubs and City Council members are Caucasian. He also talks about some of the “intra-racial battles” that might exist in community college districts where the student population and Board of Trustees are surprisingly ethnically diverse. He talked about working in a Northern California college district where the Board was heavily African-American. He believed there was those “African-American versus Latina/o issues that carried over to campuses. You must deal with those schisms and be able to overcome and excel in this type of environment where there are biases and prejudices towards Latina/os.”

Conversely, Subject 2 believed that he never had to deal with issues of racism directly. He is certain that he reached executive-level administrative positions on merit, his competence, desire, ethical composition, and persevering many years until he reached his goal. In contrast, he does feel that racism might have been a factor when a Latino had not been chosen President for several years at his current College. “There had only been one Latino President in the history of the school and he was forced out because of a sexual harassment issue. The Board thought he or another Latina/o might bring those same characteristics to the College.”

Ethnicity did not come to the forefront for Subject 3 on his rise through the administrative ranks. He believed that he was prepared, academically and professionally, to assume greater levels of responsibility. He did mention ethnicity and racism when he described a time he was leaving one community college for another. He shared a

memorable anecdote that was heavy on racist implications. “I remember a mentor telling me they almost resigned as Chancellor when a Trustee representing their district said over my dead body will you hire a Latina because she would not represent them and they would not fit in at the yacht club.” From his experiences, Subject 3 believes that racism and ethnic factors are real and that most people have a narrow view of perceptions, which can influence decisions.

Subject 4’s perspective is unique in that she never felt her ethnicity or being a woman affected her climb to executive-level positions. She felt that perhaps she was possibly oblivious to those characteristics because she never thought she couldn’t be a professional and a woman all at once. “I’ve thought about this with other Latinas. I am not conscious of my gender. I guess in a group, I am just a person. I’ve never been subjected to harassment maybe because I am married.”

Subject 5 believed gender and ethnicity have played a role in preparing her and proving that she belonged. She talked about being the only woman at the administrative table. She talked about starting her career and being one of the few, if not the only Latina/o in management positions. She talked about her stature, which she felt might not make her look “Presidential.” For Subject 5 it all came down to “being reflective about myself in regards to all of these characteristics.”

Subject 6 was one of the subjects who purposefully sought positions in HSIs. Perhaps this was a reason that race and ethnicity did not play a major role in his progress. He believed that preparation was the key but he even went on to say that ethnicity might play a positive role in expanding the prevalence of Latina/os in CEO positions, particularly with impending retirements and the migration of Latina/os to areas of the

country that might recruit aspiring leaders. Subject 6 also offered his insight for Latina leaders and felt they probably had it harder than males because they have traditionally been viewed as the do-all parents in the household, balancing careers, family, and motherhood. Ultimately they are the ones who might have to develop a game plan to a greater degree than their male counterparts.

Subject 7 reflected on being the dutiful daughter, succeeding in school, and traditionally being the only female CEO amongst a group of male colleagues. For Subject 7, the good old-boys club is alive and well. She spoke candidly of the myopia many Board of Trustees have in hiring Latina/o candidates because of their desire to hire a reflection of themselves and an uncertainty in the Latina/o candidate. Subject 7 believe that those perceptions persist and that aspiring CEOs must prepare themselves professionally and academically so that when opportunities arise they can make a seamless transition to their new positions.

Subject 8 was in the minority in believing that gender or ethnicity played a significant role in her professional career. Coming from the Human Resources umbrella might have equipped her with the perspective of having the proper qualifications for her position. She believed there was one instance when not being of a certain ethnicity played a role in not being offered a position. However, she felt that this was reinforced by the political nature of the position and who the Board wanted to hire at that particular time.

### **Research Question 1 Findings**

How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?



The primary interview questions that correlated most frequently with research question one include:

1. What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?
2. How long have you been a community college executive administrator?
3. What was your first employment position in a community college?
4. What was your first administrative experience?
7. Can you recall mentoring tools or techniques that you found to help Latina/o faculty, staff, or middle-level administrators reach executive administrative positions?
8. How do you know when your career has influenced the career of an aspiring administrator?
9. Do you have specific examples of how you have served as a mentor or when someone mentored you?
10. In your rise to executive administrative positions, what challenges did you encounter?

As a result of subject responses, the three most identified themes are included in the following table.

Table 6

*Research Question 1 Thematic Categories*

<b>Thematic Category (Number of Times Identified)</b>	<b>Key Theme Definition</b>
Employment (22)	On the job work experiences and colleague relationships or influences attributed to their growth.
Family (18)	The influence of their family on their personal, academic, and professional growth played a major factor in their careers.
Experiences (17)	The combined life, academic, and professional experiences contributed to the pursuit of their community college career.

## Research Question 2 Findings

How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?

The primary interview questions that correlated most frequently with research question two include:

1. What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o an executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?
2. How long have you been a community college executive administrator?
3. What was your first employment position in a community college?
4. What was your first administrative experience?
7. Can you recall mentoring techniques that you found to help Latina/o faculty, staff, or middle-level administrators reach executive administrative positions?
8. How do you know when your career has influenced the career of an aspiring administrator?
9. Do you have specific examples of how you have served as a mentor or when someone mentored you?
10. In your rise to executive administrative positions, what challenges did you encounter?

As a result of subject responses, the three most identified themes are included in the following table.

Table 7

### *Research Question 2 Thematic Categories*

<b>Thematic Category (Number of Times Identified)</b>	<b>Key Theme Definition</b>
Mentoring (11)	Indirect or direct mentor or mentee relationships that have helped in professional and/or academic development.
Employment (9)	On the job work experiences and colleague relationships or influences attributed to their growth.

(Continued)

Experiences (8)

The combined life, academic, and professional experiences contributed to the pursuit of their community college career.

### Research Question 3 Findings

What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced in their rise through the California community college leadership ranks?

The primary interview questions that correlated most frequently with research question two include:

1. What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o an executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?
11. Have you been aware of the changes in the efforts to hire Latina/o community college CEOs?
12. What do you see as the possible barriers to Latina/o CEOs?

As a result of subject responses, the three most identified themes are included in the following table.

Table 8

#### *Research Question 3 Thematic Categories*

Thematic Category (Number of Times Identified)	Key Theme Definition
Ethnicity (10)	Ethnicity includes issues of race, gender, and stereotypes
Relations (9)	These are the professional relationships established with college constituency including: faculty, classified staff, and management
Board of Trustees (8)	Board of Trustees includes their positions, authority to hire or terminate, influence within an organization or community, perceptions, and relationships with college constituency.

### Research Question 4 Findings

What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their rise from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?

The primary interview questions that correlated most frequently with research question two include:

1. What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o as an executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?

11. Have you been aware of the changes in the efforts to hire Latina/o community college CEOs?

12. What do you see as the possible barriers to Latina/o CEOs?

As a result of subject responses, the three most identified themes are included in the following table.

Table 9

*Research Question 4 Thematic Categories*

<b>Thematic Category (Number of Times Identified)</b>	<b>Key Theme Definition</b>
Mentoring (25)	Indirect or direct mentor or mentee relationships that have helped in professional and/or academic development.
Relations (11)	These are the professional relationships established with college constituency including: faculty, classified staff, and management,
Professional Development (7)	Professional organizations such as NCCHC or Ph.D. and Ed.D programs in leadership and administration.

The primary methods to help overcome obstacles or challenges facing aspiring or current Latina/os included mentoring, professional relationships, and professional development. The overwhelming theme to help one traverse an oftentimes-tenuous journey was to provide or receive mentorship and to develop collegial relationships with all constituency groups within an organization. Professional development was also a primary theme because at many workshops or trainings you have the opportunity to network with others who have similar goals, dialogue with potential mentors, and to learn the intricacies of community college management and leadership principles.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The eight Latina/o community college executive leaders who participated in this study ranged in age from 45-70 years of age, the majority of whom were 50 years or older. Subject ethnicities included one of Puerto Rican descent, four of Mexican descent, one of Central American descent, one of Spanish descent, and one who identified herself equal parts of Puerto Rican and Cuban descent. One of the subjects was born in Nicaragua and the rest were born in the US. Two of the subjects possessed a Master's Degree and six possessed a Doctorate Degree. All but two of the subjects knew early on they would attend college and two of the eight subjects attended a community college before transferring to a four-year school.

In response to research question one, the three primary thematic categories that subjects identified as influencing their rise to community college executive administrative positions were employment, family, and the personal or professional experiences they endured in their rise through the community college ranks. Employment experiences were critical because subjects were able to learn-by-doing and were also fortunate to have met colleagues or mentors who provided support throughout the years. For all eight subjects, family was the major driving force that shaped their careers. Whether raised by parents or grandparents, all subjects voiced the importance of the familial structure in forming the person they are today. Personal and professional experiences were also critical because it is through many of these instances that subjects had to reassess their strengths and weaknesses to become better leaders.

Similar to research question one, employment and personal or professional experiences were critical to understanding the perceptions placed on the eight subjects in research question two. Mentorship was the thematic category that most helped in

developing comprehension about their career development and preparing the subjects with the necessary skills to succeed as a community college administrator. All subjects have had a direct or indirect mentor or mentee relationship with someone throughout their careers. Some subjects had identified a colleague or friend within the community college system, and others with someone who had gone through similar experiences before them.

In response to research question 3, the subjects discussed the challenges they faced in their rise to executive level positions. The key themes of concern or dialogue were ethnicity, professional relationships, and the authority of the Board of Trustees. For six of the subjects, they believed there was an underlying racism or distrust of Latina/o CEOs. Some also contended with gender issues yet there was no overwhelming consensus amongst the female subjects that being a woman hindered their progress. Establishing collegial relationships was also critical in the development of the subjects. They believed that positive professional relationships with college constituency groups were helpful in garnering support from every faction within their organization. Lastly, Board of Trustees was mentioned as being a wild card. Many felt Boards do not want to hire Latina/os because most want to see a reflection of themselves or of an outgoing CEO in their hire. Further, Board of Trustees are the ones who have the final say in selecting CEOs so they have the power to make the tough choice, hire the qualified Latina/o, or to make the politic choice and hire someone they want even though that might not be the correct choice.

Responses to research question four discussed the primary strategies that subjects utilized to help overcome obstacles or challenges that they faced as aspiring or current

Latina/o executive community college leaders. The primary thematic categories included mentoring, professional relationships, and professional development. The primary theme to help one overcome trials was to provide or receive mentorship. The second was to develop collegial relationships with all constituency groups within an organization. Lastly, professional development was identified as important because at many workshops or trainings you have the opportunity to network with others who have similar goals, dialogue with potential mentors, and to learn the intricacies of community college management and leadership strategies.

Table 10 graphically illustrates the eight thematic categories, the relationship of the thematic categories to the four guiding research questions, and the number of times that each thematic category was mentioned. One area to highlight is that four of the eight themes were related to more than one guiding research question. Employment and experiences were identified in response to guiding research questions one and two. Mentoring was identified in response to guiding questions two and four and relations was the thematic category identified in response to guiding research questions three and four.

Table 10

*Multiple Representations of Themes and Number of Times Mentioned*

Thematic Categories	Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3	Research Question 4
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	How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?	How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?	What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced in their rise through the California community college leadership ranks?	What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their rise from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?
Mentoring		11		25
Employment	22	9		
Experiences	17	8		
Relations			9	11
Family	18			
Ethnicity			10	
Board of Trustees			8	
Professional Development				7

In the following chapter, each of these eight key themes will be discussed in light of the study data and research literature. Chapter 5 will also present and discuss study conclusions and present recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

Latina/o executive-administrators have unique experiences and insights related to leadership in community colleges. There has been limited research regarding Latina/os in executive administrative positions. A lack of knowledge continues to hinder the development of aspiring leaders who are currently serving in middle-level manager, faculty, and staff positions at two-year colleges. Community college personnel might benefit from learning more about the experiences of Latina/o community college leaders, along with learning about the richness of their diverse cultures. Such insight might promote a better understanding of Latina/os and serves to offer options to encourage the mentorship and development of future Latina/o executive-administrators. A deeper understanding of Latina/o community college executive administrators might enrich the reader's comprehension of the obstacles, challenges, and successes that Latina/o leaders have faced in their rise to executive administrative positions in California community colleges.

The final chapter of this dissertation discusses the key findings that were developed from interviews of eight community college executive administrators. Their portraits helped to develop primary themes that are the foundation of the discussion. These themes included: experiences--education, employment, and family; mentorship; and ethnicity. Even though not all pathways to a community college Presidency or Chancellorship are the same, the conclusions placed an emphasis on mentorship and professional or personal experiences aiding the success of aspiring leaders. Lastly, the

final thoughts provide the reader with insights about the impact that the study had on the researcher's professional development as an aspiring community college CEO.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o leadership in community colleges through in-depth interviews of current California community college executive administrators. More specifically, this study explored: (a) the experiences of Latina/o California community college executive administrators as related to their career paths, education, personal and professional challenges, leadership, and their self-perceptions of the leadership expectations placed on them; (b) the understanding of community college leadership of Latina/o community college executive administrators based on their experiences; and, (c) the strategies used by Latina/o community college executive administrators in meeting the challenges and obstacles encountered during their rise from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions. The portraits developed by the researcher presented the lived experiences of the subjects and offer a blueprint to Latina/os who have similar career aspirations. More succinctly, the portraits provided insight into how Latina/o California community college executive administrators might mentor and support the academic and professional development of aspiring Latina/o community college leaders.

### **Research Questions**

The research in this study focused on the following questions:

1. How have the career path, education, personal and professional experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership?
2. How do Latina/o community college executive administrators describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional

challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges?

3. What challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced in their rise through the California community college leadership ranks?
4. What strategies have Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their rise from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators?

### **Research Design Overview**

This study utilized a qualitative approach and portraiture in methodology. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with eight executive administrators. The interviews included 20 questions, with follow-up queries for clarification. The purpose for selecting a qualitative approach was to make a personal and professional connection with the subjects in order to obtain in-depth perspectives of Latina/os in California community college executive administrative positions.

Portraiture was utilized to capture the breadth and depth of the informants and to give the reader purposeful and compelling stories of the leadership pathways of each subject. In order to write a comprehensive dissertation, the researcher interviewed four males and four females. The interviews were of a semi-structured nature and included open-ended questions utilized for clarification. Further, interviews provided opportunities to understand the experiences of Latina/o California community college executive administrators as they have been promoted to higher-level positions. Each response to the research questions and corresponding interview questions were compiled and a rate of frequency was noted to ensure proper coding once data was analyzed. Any emergent themes were analyzed by the researcher and doctoral graduates with coding

experience, and then titled under each category. The external coders were invited to reinforce accuracy of data and to bring light to any themes that might have been overlooked by the researcher.

### **Discussion of Key Findings**

Eight important themes emerged from an analysis of the subjects' portrayures and their collective responses to the study interview questions. Four of eight themes related to more than one guiding question and included: mentoring, employment, experiences, and relations. Four additional themes related to one guiding question and included: family, ethnicity, Board of Trustees, and professional development.

These eight themes were influential in shaping their experiences as community college executive administrators and serve as a means for support and professional development to aspiring leaders. Following is a discussion of each of the key themes.

**Mentoring and professional relationships.** Mentoring, including professional networks and relationships, was a key theme that emerged in response to guiding study questions two and four. Professional relationships, and their importance, emerged from guiding question three, and like mentoring was important in guiding question four. Mentoring was cited eleven times in relation to question two that explored how Latina/o community college executive leaders described their experiences as they related to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges.

Mentoring was the preeminent theme in this manuscript. All of the subjects have served as mentors and all have been formally or informally mentored. Mentoring helped to develop the subjects' comprehension about their career development and helped them

to acquire the necessary skills to succeed as community college administrators. All subjects have had a direct or indirect mentor relationship with someone throughout their careers. Some subjects identified a colleague or friend within the community college system, and others with someone who had gone through similar experiences before them. Mentoring was cited 25 times in response to question four that investigated strategies Latina/o community college executive administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their rise from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators. Ultimately, to provide or receive mentorship was a primary theme to help one traverse an oftentimes-tenuous pathway.

The professional relationships the Latina/o leaders mentioned delved into the connections they had made with college constituency groups including faculty, classified staff persons, and management. Professional relationships were cited nine times in relationship to guiding question three, which asked subjects what challenges and obstacles, if any, they had faced in their rise through the California community college leadership ranks. Similar to mentoring, the subject's professional relationships were cited 11 times in relationship to guiding questions four, which highlighted the strategies the eight leaders used to meet challenges or obstacles throughout their career trajectory.

The literature in this manuscript detailed how mentorship and leadership programs are critical to the development of aspiring community college executive administrators. Further, the literature highlighted that many community colleges do not pursue candidates of color. Not surprisingly, most community colleges do not actively recruit minority candidates and do not support peer groups for personal and professional enrichment (Gutierrez et al., 2002).

**Employment and experiences.** The experiences of Latina/os working in community colleges were the second most highlighted themes that emerged in response to guiding study questions one and two. It was important to include these themes in the same discussion because their importance and significance was seamless. Employment experiences included the influences that might have contributed to the subjects' professional experiences. The career trajectory of every subject interviewed was unique. Two subjects, Subject 2 and Subject 5, began as counselors, but the rest of the subjects' experienced different pathways to reaching executive administrative positions. Experiences included the combined life, academic, and professional experiences that contributed to the pursuit of a career in community colleges. Employment was cited 22 times and Latina/o experiences in community colleges were cited 17 times in relation to question one. Question one explored how career pathway, including education, personal, and professional experiences contributed to their understanding of Latina/o community college leadership. Employment was cited nine times and Latina/o experiences in community colleges were cited eight times in relation to question two, which explored how Latina/o community college executive leaders describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators in community colleges.

In the literature review we read that many Latina/os are not represented in large numbers in community colleges. First, most Latina/os struggle to make it to community colleges let alone graduate from high school. The eight subjects in the dissertation learned early on that education could bestow professional gifts to them that could change

their lives forever. Therefore, exploring these experiences might help a future generation of Latina/o students who will subsequently make up a large percentage of the academic ranks in community colleges in the near future. The literature indicated that only 20% of Latina/o community college students complete an AA or AS degree, or transfer to a four-year university after 6 years. Only seven percent of California Latina/os ages 25 years and older held a college degree in 2009 (Puente, 2012). Therefore, the importance of education must be introduced to Latina/o students at a young age.

Latina/o youth sometimes fail to recognize that potential for intellectual development is a key human attribute and that they should strive to develop this capacity. For the eight subjects depicted in these portraits this was critical from an early age. Unfortunately, most Latina/os do not receive this message or this is not made a priority as evidenced by the fact that only 55% of Latina/o students who started 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 1999 graduated (Kaufman et al., 2000). Like some of the subjects in the study, particularly Subject 6, programs such as Upward Bound helped in providing a foundation for future growth and success. Latina/o families can benefit from clear information about how to interpret school communication, courses to take in high school, and monetary support in the form of grants that are available for postsecondary education (Goldenberg et al., 2001).

**Family.** Family was a key theme that emerged and was cited 18 times in response to guiding study question one. This theme helped to explore how career path, including professional and personal experiences of Latina/o community college executive administrators contributed to their understanding of community college leadership. All of the subjects were raised in homes with a degree of familial structure and support. This

is one of the reasons they attributed to their success as they participated in postsecondary education. It behooves colleges to mimic these familial experiences that are very important to Latina/os. If so, more students might persist through their college experience, which could result in more Latina/o community college faculty, staff, and administrators. The literature stated that paying attention to extending the social and emotional foundations of the group helps to increase student's social integration into the community college setting and promotes retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

The impact that familial support has on the success of Latina/os students and professionals is immense. Familial experiences were unanimous in helping the eight subjects in the dissertation pursue and subsequently attain a college degree, which allowed them to become academicians. Even though the subjects did not know early on that they would pursue careers in community colleges, the support and influence of family helped them to reach their academic goals, which propelled them to having successful careers.

**Ethnicity.** Ethnicity, including the influence of gender, was a key theme that was cited 10 times in response to guiding study question number three. Ethnicity was a theme that arose from the challenges and obstacles, if any, that Latina/o executive administrators faced in their rise through the California community college leadership ranks, and included factors of race, gender, and stereotypes. Lastly, ethnicity played a major role in the development of the subjects as community college leaders. Most contend frequently with their ethnicity in the professional setting. Most acknowledge that biases still exist and for the women in the manuscript, they were cognizant of the fact



they had to shine more than their male colleagues, including Latinos, in order to be perceived as legitimate leaders.

One of the main premises of the literature review was to investigate ethnicity and how it affects Latina/os as students and professionals. CRT highlighted that being a Latina/o in academia, particularly postsecondary education, means that one is a handful of those fortunate enough to exist on a college campus. Latina/os represent the entire Latina/o race or group whereas Caucasians take a position as individuals (Zamudio et al., 2011). CRT also contends that the progress of Latina/os and other ethnic groups might be slowed by the institutional racism that is ingrained in many of the organizations today. Even though these norms exist, it is difficult to change the perception by governmental law or organizational policies because most institutions believe these inequalities or injustices do not continue to exist (Delgado, 1995). One of the ways that might help in making changes at the postsecondary level is to begin making changes at the K-12 level. From a young age the system prepares students to compete in a system of winners and losers that is supported by social class, gender hierarchy, and ethnicity (McQuillan, 1998; Olivas, 1997).

**Gender.** The experiences of the four women in this dissertation were distinct. Two of the subjects believed they never had to contend with being Latinas and executive administrators. Two of the subjects believed that those factors still exist. The literature also supports this assertion by the latter two subjects. For example, in one Presidential search a Latina was perceived as pudgy and tired looking. In another search, a Vice President and faculty member believed a Latina candidate was timid and uninspired. Further, they believed she lacked the dynamic qualities a leader possesses (Haro, 2003).

Unfortunately, many hiring committees continue to fuel the perceptions of how a community college CEO must look or how they must speak.

In another study of community college Presidents the literature indicated that Latinas in CEO roles are: (a) probably Catholic, (b) married to a non-Latino male, (c) most likely bilingual and bicultural, and (d) is first generation in her family to be college educated (Cipres, 1999). This dissertation did not investigate the first two characteristics thus this data is not available. However, one of the subjects identified herself as bilingual and all four had a strong sense of being bicultural. In regards to education, three of the four subjects were the first generation to attend college and two subjects had fathers who attended college and believed it was a family expectation to obtain a baccalaureate degree.

**Board of trustees.** The influence of the Board of Trustees was a theme that was cited eight times and emerged in response to guiding study question three, which explored what challenges and obstacles, if any, have Latina/o executive administrators faced in their rise through the California community college leadership ranks. The Board of Trustees are elected officials who have the authority to hire or terminate a college President or Chancellor, influence the decision-making of a college or district, and maintain collegial relationships with college constituency groups and the community they serve. Every subject in the dissertation had personal perceptions, positive and negative, about the influence of the Board of Trustees and their influence and power to hire people of color, particularly Latina/os. They also confirmed the high political nature of the job at the executive administrative levels.

The literature had some insightful information regarding the Board of Trustees. If a Latina/o is fortunate enough to be a campus leader, particularly a President or Chancellor, it is imperative a leader can be effective in moving an agenda. Many Boards do not have experiences working extensively with Latina/os therefore you need to be able to assess proposals in a manner that makes board members comfortable and supportive. Further, in order for the Latina/o leader to succeed they must ensure that they magnify the Boards unique role on campus as stewards of public trust and accountability (Jensen & Giles, 2006).

**Professional development.** Professional development was cited seven times in relation to question four that explored the strategies Latina/o community college executive-level administrators utilized to meet challenges and obstacles encountered in their rise from faculty and staff personnel to executive administrators. Latina/o community college executive leaders describe their experiences as they relate to career path, education, personal and professional challenges, and their perceptions of the expectations placed on them as executive administrators. Professional development mainly included participation in professional organizations such as NCCHC and Ph.D. or Ed.D programs that prepared aspiring leaders for leadership and administration.

Professional development training programs further help to cement the mentor-mentee relationship amongst aspiring administrators. The AFP helps aspiring leaders to observe and participate in key meetings and events, participate in multi-day seminars, develop a network of higher education leaders, and participate in events under the direction of a mentor (American Council of Education, 2012). The HERS Institute allows alumnae to develop and plan networks, to better understand higher education, how

to manage resources, and helps to map leadership development (HERS, n.d.). ACCCA supports aspiring leaders through professional development and networking opportunities, which include an annual conference, budget workshops, mentor programs, and the renowned Administrator 101 and 201 course training program (ACCCA, n.d.). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) particularly focuses on supporting the current CEO with a three day institute that provides opportunities for newer presidents to develop mentor-mentee relationships with more seasoned presidents, focusing on immediate challenges and opportunities that CEOs are facing on their respective campuses (AACC, 2009). NCCHC, particularly for middle-level and executive-level Latina/o leaders, was developed to address the lack of Hispanic leaders in US community colleges. The NCCHC offers fellows the core training needed to prepare for CEO positions. One of their professional development opportunities is a one-year program that consists of training and learning seminars, career preparation, mentoring with NCCHC leaders, board members, or past fellows, and an assessment of leadership capacity.

These institutes, academies, and organizations expose aspiring leaders to situational experiences and might introduce some to mentors who can serve as allies for advice and support (Leon, 2003). Ultimately, mentoring and professional development opportunities, along with their preparation, help to equip administrators with the tools to be effective managers on their college campuses.

## **Conclusions**

Four conclusions resulted from an analysis and interpretation of the data collected and presented in this study. For aspiring Latina/o administrators, the experiences,

culture, and traditions of their family lives provide the foundation and tools for success in academia. The impact of familial support was a consensus among the eight subjects in the dissertation. Similar to the literature, the experiences of the eight leaders highlighted family as the primary reason for attending postsecondary education. Every subject had parents or grandparents that proved to be catalysts in helping them reach their academic and professional goals. The degree of familial support significantly aids the college experience of first-generation Latina/o college students and provides motivation for success (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Gandara, 1995; Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000).

Colleges that provide support groups in the form of Learning Communities or Supplemental Instruction imitate family life and cohesiveness that many Latina/os traditionally experience at home. The goal of Learning Communities is that the learning experience can be shared rather than isolated (Tinto, 1997). Supplemental Instruction decreases a student's sense of isolation on a college campus, which might cause attrition amongst Latina/o students (Maxwell, 1995). Therefore, the cohort-like learning model might be an effective way to model the experiences of the home life, which might help to produce more successful students.

The second conclusion is that Latina/o community college executive leaders follow diverse pathways in their career trajectories. Unlike other careers where the road to a CEO or managerial position might have a boilerplate progression model, the trajectory of a community college executive-level manager varies. The literature highlighted a traditional career pathway to executive administrative positions in community colleges. The pathway went as follows: Faculty to Dean of Instruction or Dean of Student Services, to Vice President or Vice Chancellor of Instruction, Student

Services, or Administrative Services, to President, and finally Chancellor (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Cohen & March, 1974; Vaughn, 1986). Even though this has been a traditional route, many Latina/os are finding that this norm no longer exists. The eight subjects in this manuscript proved that not all roads to executive-level positions are the same. Subject 1 began as a community college faculty member; Subject 2 began as a counselor; Subject 3 began as an institutional researcher; Subject 4 began in the state Chancellor's Office; Subject 5 began as a counselor; Subject 6 began as a fulltime university professor; Subject 7 began as a Learning Center Coordinator; and Subject 8 began as a part time ESL instructor. Therefore, for those aspiring to executive-level positions, the subjects in the manuscript proved that one can take an unconventional route to the Presidency of a community college.

The third conclusion is that mentoring is highly valued by Latina/o community college executive leaders and deemed essential to career advancement in general and specifically within the California Community College system. Each subject interviewed in this study candidly discussed the influence that mentoring had on their careers, either as mentors or mentees. The consensus was that giving back to others was important for current or aspiring leaders, and that a legitimate need exists for mentorship. Further, subjects believe that giving back is done in mentoring leaders of tomorrow. The literature succinctly highlighted the need for current Latina/o leaders to mentor aspiring Latina/o leaders. The most evident concern and area of need for leaders of color is a mentor (Valverde, 2003). In his study Vaughn indicated that only one in ten Latino community college Presidents indicated they were helped as a member of a peer or mentoring network (Vaughn, 1989). Lastly, Saenz and Ponjuan (2008) believe "Latino

male leaders can be the most powerful image for other Latinos to embrace as role models. They can make future leaders believe that their future is not limited by their perception but rather by the encouragement and positive role model behaviors of their Latino male mentors” (p. 84).

Networks and professional development were two primary components in support of the influence of mentorship. Networks help to forge professional relationships, while professional development in the form of workshops or leadership institutes can prepare one with the qualities of being an executive administrator. Ultimately, having a trusted ally who can be a support mechanism for an aspiring executive administrator could be instrumental in becoming an accomplished leader.

Finally, the fourth conclusion found that Latina/o leaders in the California Community College system experience ethnic bias in their advancement to executive level positions and this bias exists specifically more for female subjects. They believed that at some point during their early career, or even as executive administrators, they had to prove themselves to a greater degree than their male counterparts. To combat any negative perceptions of being a Latina executive-level administrator, they believed that preparation was the key to success and assisted them in persevering in professional environments that might not have been welcoming to Latinas. Similar to the females, the male subjects in the dissertation believed ethnicity played a role in helping them understand that preparation was critical because being Latinos magnified their status as executive-level administrators ten-fold. Further, combating the old-boys network and traversing an environment where they are often times the minority intensified their need

to be the best, and to acquire excellent leadership skills and the necessary competencies to oversee an organization.

The existing literature was extremely insightful in discussing the impact of ethnicity and gender and how that might influence Latina/o executive administrators in community colleges. Current and aspiring leaders believe that there is a considerable bias towards them in hiring and policies or procedures. Some Latina/o administrators feel marginalized while others experience direct acts of racism (Santiago, 1996).

There is a need to continue to improve diversity practices in community college hiring which might minimize the self-perception by many Latina/os that they must be overqualified to assume leadership positions in community colleges. Unfortunately, most community colleges do not actively recruit minority candidates for management positions, lack professional development for faculty and staff, and do not support peer groups for personal and professional enrichment (Gutierrez et al., 2002).

Many of the subjects in the manuscript believed they had to prove themselves more than colleagues of other ethnicities because they were viewed as a token hire. Most hoped they were hired based on their skills and expertise rather than their ethnicity. The literature confirmed that nobody is watched more closely than a Latina/o faculty member or administrator (Gutierrez et al., 2002). Another perspective is that Latina/os are selected for leadership roles in community colleges because the institution wants to present themselves as promoting the hiring of multicultural leaders or being culturally competent organizations (Lopez & Schultz, 1980).



### **Policy and Practice Recommendations**

Four policy and practice recommendations resulted from the analysis and interpretation of study findings and conclusions. First, it is recommended that all current and aspiring Latina/o community college middle-level managers seek out mentors and begin to mentor Latina/o community college students, faculty, and staff with the goal of: (a) paying it forward, and (b) to establish connections with those who might possess similar professional and cultural experiences in order to form positive career networks.

Second, it is recommended that Latina/o community college faculty, staff, and administrators attend professional development training, workshops, and conferences. At these gatherings one can begin to develop a network of peers with similar experiences, where one can meet potential mentors, and where one can begin to prepare for professional opportunities by acquiring the necessary skills to successfully perform in job interviews, to learn about key college duties and responsibilities, and to be exposed to staff and faculty performance related situations.

A third recommendation is that Latina/o community college personnel, including faculty, administrators, and classified staff who have aspirations of becoming executive administrators pursue a Doctorate Degree. It is of the opinion of the majority of the eight subjects in this dissertation that a Masters Degree no longer suffices to compete for CEO-level positions. When community college hiring committees recruit executive administrative candidates, they not only look at professional experiences, professional organization participation, and college committee work as qualifications, but often times the Doctorate Degree helps one to receive that coveted CEO-level interview.

A fourth recommendation is that Latina/o professional organizations such as NCCHC expand the premise of their training to include the recruitment and preparation of Latina/o community college faculty. Every chapter in this dissertation has espoused that Latina/os are the fastest ethnic minority population in the US. Current Latina/o faculty, staff, and administrators must formally convene and develop programs that recruit and prepare Latina/o community college faculty. They must also voice their concerns about community colleges and districts not making a concerted commitment to diversity training and hiring practices in order to expand their pools of qualified Latina/o applicants. The literature also indicated that most community college Presidents come from the instruction or academic affairs ranks. Therefore, preparing Latina/os to become community college faculty members is critical if more administrators are to be developed. Inviting current Latina/o faculty to facilitate these programs and workshops, mentoring aspiring faculty, and providing them with valuable training and tools is instrumental in seeing more Latina/os hired in community college faculty positions.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Nine recommendations for future research resulted from the outcomes of this study.

#### **1. Study Cultural Implications**

Study the differences in the progression of Latina/os born in the US versus those born in Spanish-speaking countries. Often times acculturation is critical in becoming successful in the academic setting, therefore, the experiences of those who are US born versus those who are foreign born might be important in determining who might be more successful, who might have struggled the more, or who might have valued education and

their cultural experiences the most.

## **2. Study HSIs Versus Non-HSIs**

Study the implications of Latina/os at HSIs versus those not serving at HSIs.

Subject 4 and 6 actively sought positions at HSIs because they felt comfortable in settings where the majority of the students were Latina/os. It might be noteworthy to explore how professional experiences have been for those at community colleges where faculty, staff, and students were not predominantly Latina/o. Were they as successful? Did they persevere? Did they regret becoming administrators? Did they regret not selecting different careers?

## **3. Study the Composition of the Board of Trustees**

In the manuscript many of the subjects talked about the Board of Trustees and community members they had to interact with on a professional level. A study worthy of further research might be to investigate if some of these executive administrators were selected as a result of at least one Board member being Latina/o. Was there a recruitment practice in place of having to hire ethnically diverse candidates? It might also be important to study if there was no presence of Latina/os on the Board or if a candidate was selected because they were going to be an Affirmative Action hire of the elected officials.

## **4. Conduct a Study of Latina/o Executive-Level Administrators in 10 Years**

An effective benchmark might be to complete a follow up of this dissertation in ten years to see what hiring changes have occurred in community colleges. Most of the subjects in this dissertation indicated that the future was bright for Latina/o CEOs, but Subject 3 believed we are regressing in the number of Latina/o community college

administrators. With the number of Latina/o community college students continuing to increase it might be important to study the gains that have been made in the number of Latina/o community college faculty and administrators in the next decade.

### **5. Conduct a Study of Four-Year Schools**

Community colleges continue to produce more Latina/o administrators than 4-year colleges and universities. Most Latina/os do not pursue university positions because they do not have the academic training for faculty positions, which hinders their pursuit of administrative positions. It might be useful to conduct a survey in the future on the number of Latina/o faculty and administrators in universities versus those at community colleges.

### **6. Conduct a Study of the K-12 Schools**

As the literature review supported, Latina/o students flounder at the K-12 level more than any other ethnic group in America. It might be a valuable research topic to study the advancement of Latina/os in K-12 education in order to gauge student success and persistence. If more Latina/os are becoming K-12 teachers and administrators, why are student's attempts at academic success so futile? This question will only carry more significance as the Latina/o population grows and more students continue to fail in the academic setting.

### **7. Conduct a Study of Latina Career Paths**

In this study it became evident that the experiences of women were entirely distinct than that of their male counterparts. It might be important to continue to explore the lives of Latinas in community college administrative roles in order to expand the pool of women in academia or professional positions.

## **8. Study the Majority Population of Community College Academicians**

It would behoove an aspiring Latina/o faculty member or administrator to explore and study the perceptions of Caucasians regarding their Latina/o counterparts. Do they perceive them as equally competent? Do they perceive them as legitimate leaders? The researcher recommends developing a confidential survey that might allow participants to be unbiased and forthright, with the goal of producing data that could make meaningful change or to help in the professional development of Latina/o academicians.

## **9. Study Multiple Ethnic Groups in Community Colleges**

A study that includes a diverse pool of participants might allow outsiders to read perspectives that are culturally and ethnically diverse. Ethnic groups have different experiences therefore including the stories of numerous ethnic groups might be powerful in depicting vignettes that make up the melting pot of this country and that are reflected in our community colleges.

## **Final Thoughts**

As an emerging community college administrator and aspiring CEO, this manuscript was my attempt at explaining the stories; including background, challenges, obstacles, and successes; of eight remarkable Latina/o community college leaders from an inside perspective so that the reader might gain insight into their unique leadership preparation and development. Leadership development is a result of seeing, doing, and, becoming (Covey, 2004). As the researcher, my desire is that the subjects participating in this manuscript have enlightened the outsider to help them understand and appreciate their professional experiences and how they got there; and to help the aspiring community college CEO develop into formidable leaders.

I have found leadership development to be a myriad of traits that are so interconnected that one could never begin to comprehend the differences that abound in the composition of a community college executive administrator. This study was unique in that I was able to compare the lived experiences through different lenses: male, female, academic affairs/instruction, student services, and human resources. Therefore, this study is useful in providing a guideline to Latina/os aspiring to community college executive administrative positions.

The literature review allowed me to use CRT as the foundation for the study. Race is a characteristic that continues to affect all facets of society, including education. Utilizing CRT as the focus of the literature review magnified the importance of gender, race, and ethnicity in the study, and allowed the reader to be introduced into the cultural lives of the subjects.

Community college administrators of all ethnic groups might benefit greatly from reading this manuscript, reflecting on its recommendations, and considering the outcomes of the research for future studies. Latina/os continue to grow in number and those numbers will be reflected in the student populations of our community colleges. If those numbers are not representative of the number of Latina/o administrators there might be a generation of students who might never reach their academic or professional potential.

The subject's willingness to participate allowed me to learn that our pathways are our own and we can influence the lives of those who we touch for a moment, a season, or a lifetime. For numerous reasons, these portraits have reinforced my desire to be a level-5 leader and to influence the lives of students who I come into contact with throughout my professional career. My hope is that by reading this dissertation, academicians feel

validated in their career choice as community college faculty, staff, or administrators.

Most important, I hope that the stories of these eight leaders will provide the impetus to beget a golden generation of Latina/o community college CEOs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## APPENDIX A

## Interview Protocol and Questions

Pseudonym:

Date:

Time:

At least two weeks prior to interviews, the researcher will invite the subjects to complete background questions in advance of the interview to maximize interview time. Prior to commencing the face-to-face interview, the researcher will again summarize the nature of the study. Dissertation subjects will be given a copy of the abstract and the consent form to sign.

The following is the dialogue the researcher might use prior to the interview:

- a. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a dissertation at Pepperdine University.
- b. The purpose of this qualitative study is to develop a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o executive-level administration in community college education through in-depth interviews of selected current and/or former California community college executive administrators.
- c. Interviews will take 60 to 90 minutes.
- d. I will utilize a journal to take notes of our conversation. Further, I will record the interview on a transcribing machine to help reference interview content.
- e. Any interview questions can be bypassed or either party can stop the interview at any time.
- f. I will share transcripts of the interview with you to review for accuracy.
- g. The summary of key findings from the interview will be provided to you.
- h. The data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the home of the researcher. Data will be destroyed after 3 years of study completion.
- i. This information will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher. Responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

- j. Please remember that you will not be compensated for participation. Participation is voluntary.
- k. We can begin when you are ready.

## Background Interview Questions

*Please check boxes where appropriate or fill in the answer.*

1. What is your ethnicity?

Central American	Cuban	Dominican	Mexican	Puerto Rican	South American	Spanish	Other

2. Where were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your current age?

30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 65	66 and above

4. What is your highest level of education?

BA/BS	MA/MS	MBA	Ed.D.	JD.	Ph.D.	Other

5. Did you always know you would go to college? Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Did you attend a community college before a four-year college or university?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Interview Questions

1. What are the experiences that have shaped your career as a Latina/o executive administrator (e.g. family, childhood, adolescence, social, personal, or professional)?
2. How long have you been a community college executive administrator?
3. What was your first employment position in a community college?
4. What was your first administrative position?
5. What made you choose community college education as a profession?
6. When did you realize you wanted to become an executive administrator?
7. Can you recall mentoring tools or techniques that you found to help Latina/o faculty, staff, or middle-level administrators reach executive administrative positions?
8. How do you know when your mentorship has influenced the career of an aspiring executive administrator?
9. Do you have specific examples of how you have served as a mentor or when someone mentored you? If yes, please share.
10. In your rise to executive administrative positions, what challenges did you encounter?
11. Describe some of the efforts or recruitment practices to hire Latina/o community college CEOs?
12. What do you see as the possible barriers to Latina/o CEOs?
13. As the Latina/o population continues to grow and more Latina/o students enter community colleges, what is the future of Latina/os in executive administrative positions?
14. What do you want your legacy to be?

## APPENDIX B

## Invitation to Participants

November 2012

Dear Latina/o Community College Chief Executive Officer,

My name is Vinicio J. Lopez. I am an Ed.D. candidate in the Education, Leadership, Administration, and Policy program at Pepperdine University. My research involves developing a comprehensive understanding of Latina/o executive administration in community colleges through in-depth interviews of selected current and/or former California community college Chief Executive Officer's (CEOs)--presidents, vice chancellors, and chancellors. More specifically, this study will explore:

- a) The experiences of Latina/o California community college CEOs as related to their career paths, education, personal and professional challenges, leadership, and their self-perceptions of the leadership expectations placed on them
- b) The understanding of community college leadership of Latina/o community college CEOs based on their experiences
- c) The strategies used by Latina/o community college CEOs in meeting the challenges and obstacles encountered during their transition from faculty and staff to executive administrative positions

My primary goal as part of this qualitative research study is to interview 10 to 15 Latina/o community college CEOs during the fall 2012 semester. You have been selected as a possible participant for this study due to your knowledge, background, and experience in this subject matter. I would very much be honored and appreciative of your participation in this study as it will help me generate a manuscript that will assist in bringing about more awareness to Latina/os aspiring to become community college CEOs.

Please be aware that your participation is entirely voluntary. Further, you do not have to complete any part of the interview questions if you so choose. However, the information you provide will be important for Latina/os aspiring to community college CEO positions. Some other important highlights regarding your participation in this study:

- Your interview will last 60 to 90 minutes at a mutually agreed upon location convenient for you
- Your answers to questions will be confidential and you will be provided the opportunity to review and certify transcripts
- You will remain anonymous at all stages of the interview
- Pseudonyms will be used in Chapter 4, the reporting section of the dissertation
- All interview notes, journals, transcribed records, and informed consent forms will be stored in a locked file cabinet at the home of the researcher

- Three years after the dissertation is published, informed consent forms, journals, and all records will be destroyed

I will be contacting you personally with a consent form, answering all of your questions, and presenting you with a copy of the interview questions. Please read and sign the consent form first. The copy of research questions is a courtesy for you to know what you will be asked. Thank you in advance for your participation.

If you have any questions about the interview, or would like more information in regard to the research I am involved in, please do not hesitate to contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Written correspondence can be sent to xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx. You may also contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Linda Purrington at (xxx) xxx-xxxx (Graduate School of Education and Psychology, Pepperdine University) or xxxxx.xxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this valuable research study.

Respectfully yours,

Vinicio J. López  
Doctoral Student  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

## APPENDIX C

## Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Participant:

Principal Investigator: Vinicio J. López

Approval Date:

Expiration Date:

Title of Research Study: Latina/os, Leadership, and their Legacies: A Portraiture of Community College Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)

1. I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the dissertation research study being conducted by doctoral student Vinicio Jesús López, from the Education, Leadership, Administration, and Policy Program at Pepperdine University. I understand that I may contact Mr. López's supervisor, Dr. Linda Purrington, if I have any questions or concerns regarding this study. Mr. López can be reached at xxxxxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx and Dr. Purrington can be reached at xxxxx.xxxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxx.xxx.
2. I understand that the overall purpose of this study is to give voice to the experiences, insights, and recommendations of Latina/o community college CEOs. I have been asked to participate in this study because I am a community college CEO who is willing to participate in this study.
3. I understand that my participation will involve the following:
  - Participation in one 60 to 90 minute uninterrupted, face-to-face interview with the principal investigator. This interview is to be conducted at a time and place convenient and agreed upon by both parties.
4. I agree to any follow up phone calls to clarify meaning of my statements so they are depicted in this research as I meant them to be.
5. My participation in this study will be from the approval date listed above through no later than April 19, 2013.
6. I understand that the possible benefits that I may contribute is to the recruitment and development of aspiring Latina/o community college CEOs
7. I might add to the limited body of literature that gives voice to the experiences, insights, and recommendations for Latina/o community college CEOs.



8. I understand that harm to human subjects is not limited to physical injury, and that there are certain risks and discomforts that might be associated with research. The physical risks might be fatigue for sitting for a period of 60 to 90 minutes. Psychological risks may include boredom, embarrassment, and anxiety in answering the interview questions. I believe the risks of this study are minimized and are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits of the study.
9. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate and/or withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project or any activity at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I also understand that the researcher may find it necessary to end my participation in this study.
10. I understand that the investigator will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and my identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this project. If the findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. I understand that the interviews will be recorded only with my permission prior to each interview. The raw data gathered will be stored in locked file cabinets to which only the investigator will have access to in his home.
11. I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact the dissertation chairperson, Dr. Linda Purrington at xxxxx.xxxxxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx, if I have other questions or concerns about this research. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I understand that I can contact IRB Chairperson, Dr. Douglas Leigh at xxxxx.xxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxx.edu.
12. I understand I will not receive any compensation, financial or otherwise, for participating in this study.

All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form, which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

Participants Signature:

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Date:

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I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

Principal Investigator:

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Date:

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