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BASED FOLKLÓRICO FOSTERING COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH
TO INFLUENCE THE POST SECONDARY ASPIRATIONS,
PATHWAYS AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS OF
LATINAS

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Jenna Cortez Aguirre

June 2019

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ABSTRACT

Within the broader context of the representation of Latinas in higher education, the purpose of this study is to investigate the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who were involved in a community-based folklórico program. In addition, this study seeks to understand how participating in folklórico programs can influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all. Finally, this study examines the skills developed by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to education and career goals or life in general.

The theoretical framework of this study was Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth and included the expansion of community cultural wealth by Rendon, Nora, and Kanagala (2014). The method of this study was an instrumental case study using individual semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and document analysis to collect data.

The findings of this study described the influence of participation in community-based folklórico programs for Latinas, and the development of transferable skills. This study informs educational leaders about the importance of developing pathways to college for folklórico participants that are equipped with the skills, qualities, and capital necessary to be successful in higher education.

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First, I need to acknowledge and express my sincere appreciation to my family. Felix, Jacob, Beau, Joshua, and Jessica; you are my sun and stars. Thank you for all your love, understanding and support during these last few years. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to my parents who instilled in me, the value of education, and who enrolled this awkward twelve-year-old in the local folklórico program. I also want to acknowledge my BFF Yvonne Perez. Thank you for your understanding and support, and always being a good friend. We can resume our adventures now! I also want to thank my sister April Cortez, you really helped me with that last part...you know the one. I am extremely grateful to my committee, Professor Juan Delgado, Dr. Cynthia Alcantar, and most especially my chair, Dr. Nancy Acevedo-Gil, your patience, and guidance made every iteration better, and resulted in a study that makes me proud. Thank you to the members of Cohort 10, you have all supported me and inspired me along the way, and some of you kept me in this program when I doubted myself. Finally, thank you to all my coworkers and friends who attended my dissertation; you gave me a sense of comfort and support that motivated me to get it done! I also want to acknowledge with love, the cultural art of Folklórico. Folklórico made me who I am and will always be.

DEDICATION

To the memory of José Ruiz de la Torre... *mira lo que empezaste.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Community based cultural arts programs such as ballet folklórico or folklórico are plentiful in California and across the southwest. Folklórico is “a traditional dance form that tells the history of the Mexican people through dance, song, and movement” (Pérez, 2016, p. 34). There are many high school, college, and university-based folklórico programs in existence. There are also professional programs in the larger cities in the state of California; such as Los Angeles, San Jose, and Sacramento. The vast majority of folklórico programs in California are community-based. Some are created through K-12 schools, and in after-school programs, but others are small community-based programs that are directed and taught by volunteers who have a passion for the art.

When I was young, I grew up in a city that had a well-known undercurrent of discrimination against people of color; however, I grew up in a section of the city that was predominantly Mexican American. Our area was considered the “bad side” of town, but we never saw it that way or thought about it in that way unless someone else mentioned it. When my parents grew up in the same community, they were physically, mentally and emotionally punished for speaking Spanish during their K-12 experiences. They and many of the people they grew up with made a conscious decision not to teach their children Spanish as they were growing up so that they would not have to suffer the same punishment while

attending school. We typically only heard Spanish when my parents or my aunts or uncles did not want us to know what they were discussing. Unlike our friends and cousins, my siblings and I did not have grandparents who spoke Spanish with whom we needed to be able to communicate. Three of my grandparents died when my parents were children, and the one grandfather I did have, moved back to Mexico shortly after my mother (his youngest child) was married and settled as a wife and mother. He left when I was very young, and I have only one vague memory of him when I was young and a more defined memory of him when my father took us to visit him in Mexico several years later. In addition, I believe because we did not have grandparents, we missed the cultural traditions and customs that our friends and cousins experienced. My cousins all had that other set of grandparents that we did not.

I was a very awkward pre-teen, with teeth so bad I had to get braces when I was in fourth grade, and I had to wear a headgear for several years. Bullying destroyed any self-confidence I might have had and continued throughout my school years. I looked different than my siblings in that I was very dark skinned with long dark hair past my waist. I looked like the stereotypical “Mexican girl”; however, I did not speak Spanish. I felt very much like I constantly disappointed people who assumed that I spoke Spanish because of the way I looked when in reality I did not. The look on their faces always made me feel very small and not “Mexican” enough. I was a disappointment and a contradiction. For the longest time, I did not know where I belonged.

When I was twelve years old, my parents started to take my sister and me to folklórico classes at our local Catholic church. We had lessons at the church hall on Saturdays, and the cost was five dollars for each session. Our maestro was a young man from Mexico, who was the nephew of one of the elders in our community. He spoke only Spanish, so it was a challenge for us; however, we were able to navigate through it successfully. My parents started taking us to folklórico classes as a way to connect with our culture, and it did not take long for me to develop a deep and lasting love for the music, the dances, and the folklórico life. Folklórico was something at which I excelled. Initially, I had challenges in that dancers who had been there for several years were more skilled at dancing. At that time there was not a beginner group, we were all in one large group, and if you were new, you had to keep up, or fall behind. In this structure, many dancers eventually left the group. My goal was always to be as good as the more experienced dancers, and I practiced all the time to ensure I accomplished that goal. Once I learned the basics, I excelled at not only the steps, but also the transitions, and I understood where the emphasis was required. I was able to recognize what music came from which region, and which steps were the correct steps to use. It was not necessary for me to count steps because I was able to recognize the changes in the dances by listening to the music. Our maestro never had to remind me to dance “*con ganas*” and to smile as he did with some of the other dancers because I enjoyed it down to my soul, and I had the opposite problem (not necessarily a problem), in that I could not

stop smiling.

With folklórico, I felt like I had finally found where I belonged. When I performed, I was in a different world, a world where I did not care what anyone else thought; in those moments, I felt that I was dancing in a space between worlds. In a space where I was one of the best, and where I was comfortable with myself and my dark skin, and I could navigate this world dominated by Spanish, and still excel. Folklórico taught me how to accomplish a goal by being self-disciplined, persistent and focused.

Most importantly, I developed self-confidence because as time went on, our maestro recognized my ability, and more often than not, I was an example for other dancers as I was asked to practice in front of other dancers so that they could follow. In addition, since our maestro only came once a week from Los Angeles, we had to practice during the week without him. I evolved into a leader who would informally guide the weekly practices. Also, I was able to visualize in my head new choreographies when I heard new music. Because of this, I was able to translate my knowledge and ideas to the other dancers. In this process, I developed problem-solving skills, leadership skills, and interpersonal skills. I could picture in my mind a complete and choreographed dance and be able to communicate that picture to the dancers. I believe that the creator gives everyone gifts when they are born, and whatever gift you are given, it is your duty to share it with others. I also believe that when I first began to dance, I discovered my gift, and that is why many years after I stopped performing, I

continue to teach folklórico.

During this doctoral program, I read the book *Transforming Pathways for Chicana/o Students* (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017). Although folklórico was not the focus of the book, the notes described the Ballet Folklórico de Adelante as an essential space for cultural affirmation and parental engagement as part of the Adelante program (Delgado & Alemán, 2017). After reading this book, and thinking back on my experiences as a young folklórico dancer, I was inspired to engage in this study. The skills and knowledge I developed in folklórico have helped me to navigate many aspects of my life. All of this helped me to realize that the skills and knowledge acquired through folklórico programs can assist in creating pathways to college for Latinas who participate in them.

Problem Statement

Currently, I am the instructor of a community-based folklórico program and have been for over 30 years. From both personal experience and as an instructor, I know that dancers learn self-discipline, commitment, teamwork, and leadership skills as they move through the program. They also develop problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence. Even so, the number of young women who do not pursue college after high school has troubled me, and I believe that this phenomenon warrants study.

According to Gándara (2015), one in four female students in public schools in the United States is Latina, and recent projections indicate that by 2060 Latinas will form nearly one-third of the female population in the United

States. Pérez Huber et al. (2015) provide a clear visual of the educational pipeline which demonstrates that out of 100 Latina students who start elementary school only 63 graduate high school 13 graduate with a bachelor's degree, four complete a graduate degree and 0.3 complete a doctorate. Gándara (2015) states that although the percentage of Latinas completing two-year and four-year college degrees has increased significantly over the last ten years, the completion gap between Latinas and women from non-Latina/o groups remains wide.

Purpose Statement

Within the broader context of the representation of Latinas in higher education, the purpose of this study is to investigate the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who were involved in a community-based folklórico program. In addition, this study seeks to understand how participating in folklórico programs can influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all. Finally, this study examined the skills developed by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to education and career goals or life in general.

Research Questions

This study will explore the following questions, situated within the broader context of the representation of Latinas in higher education:

- What were the post-secondary and career aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program during middle school and/or high school?
- How does participating in a folklórico program influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all?
- What skills do dancers develop by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to educational and career goals or life in general?

Significance of the Study

Heuristic significance motivates individuals to investigate further, research, or act on the research in the future (Tracey, 2010). This case study will focus on one folklórico program located in Southern California; the concepts developed in this study can be further questioned and explored with other community-based folklórico programs and alternate pathways to college. Research is also identified as heuristic when it influences others such as policymakers, research participants, or the public to, to engage in action or change (Tracey, 2010). The aim is for this study to be an influence for leaders in the folklórico community to consider programs that encourage college aspirations amongst their participants.

Furthermore, this study has practical significance. According to Tracy (2010), research is practically significant if the knowledge is useful. A study that sheds light on or helpfully frames a contemporary problem has practical significance (Tracey, 2010). One of the concepts that help round out the ways

research may have practical significance is phronetic research; this type of research refers to analyses that enable practical wisdom and transformation (Tracey, 2010). The folklórico program in this case study is a microcosm of the representation of Latinas in higher education. The practical implications may include developing a “college-going” component within folklórico programs, which could consist of; campus visits, tours, and information sessions for both students and parents.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Community cultural wealth (CCW) is a concept that Yosso (2005) developed that challenges the theory of social and cultural reproduction put forth by Bourdieu and Passeron (1997), which is used to say that some communities (white, middle or upper class) are culturally wealthy, while others (nonwhite, low social, economic status) are culturally poor. Bourdieu and Passeron's (1997) theory also stated that the accumulation of specific forms of knowledge skills and abilities are not only inherited or possessed by groups that are privileged in society, but that they are the standard or the norm and that other cultures must conform to in order to gain the cultural wealth needed to be successful. More importantly, Bourdieu and Passeron (1997) maintained that students of color arrive in school with a deficit, and no skills or resources to ensure success.

Yosso (2005) challenged Bourdieu's (1997) theory by highlighting the capitals possessed by Latina/o and immigrant communities. Yosso (2005) stated, "Culture refers to behaviors and values that are learned, shared and

exhibited by a group of people (pp. 75-76)." Drawing from Critical Race Theory (CRT), CCW moves away from traditional views of cultural capital, which focused on income and wealth and expands the view of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). CCW includes various forms of capital, such as aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistance capital (Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) noted that these various forms of capital are not static; they build upon each other as community cultural wealth.

Over the years, I have experienced and observed the development of community cultural wealth within a folklórico program. In my experiences, I believe that Folklórico programs can foster the accumulation of the various elements of capital that build on each other to develop community cultural wealth in the following ways. For instance, aspirational capital is the ability people of color to dream beyond their current situation and encourage their children to do the same often within oppressive conditions (Yosso, 2005). When I was a young dancer, there was an older dancer in our group, from the same side of town as I, who graduated high school and moved away to go to college. Everyone was so excited, and she was celebrated and looked up to as someone we all wanted to emulate and become. Also, one of the parents was a nurse and lived on the "rich" side of town, and we could all see that her life and the life of her children was a higher standard than ours because she had gone to college. Their stories were proof that we could rise above our current situations. Over forty years later we have former dancers who now have college degrees that have come back to

guest teach, or participate in our beginning of the dance year events.

Linguistic capital is attained through communications experiences in more than one language (Yosso, 2005). Although I did not have the skill of more than one language, linguistic skill is also the ability to communicate in different forms such as art, music, and dance. As a dancer, you communicate joy and happiness to the audience just by performing. In addition, you are thrust into situations where the audience wants to meet you, take pictures of you and talk to you about the performance they have just experienced. Interpersonal and communication skills are developed through these interactions.

Familial capital refers to cultural knowledge that is nurtured through family that emphasizes a sense of community, history and cultural intuition (Yosso, 2005). Familial capital also expands the concept of family to include a larger extended family. As a dancer, I developed relationships that have lasted over four decades. The ties developed through folklórico are very much family ties. Over the years, dancers and parents have always used the term “folklórico family,” this has not changed over the many years I have been involved in folklórico, and now with social media, the hashtag “#folklóricofamily” is used regularly by participants in many different folklórico groups.

Social capital can be understood as the networks of people and community resources developed through social contacts (Yosso, 2005). As a dancer and as an instructor, I have seen social capital benefit many of our dancers. As a part of the folklórico family, dancers are informed of opportunities available to them

through not only the leadership of the folklórico but from parents and older dancers. At the institution where I work, I have helped dancers who have become students obtain student assistant positions. I have made myself available to them if they have questions or need help. I have seen dancers gain jobs, and other opportunities because of the connections they have developed as being part of a folklórico.

Navigational capital is the skill of maneuvering through social institutions that were not developed with communities of color in mind (Yosso, 2005). I believe this form of capital works in conjunction with social capital and familial as many times, navigating institutions is helped by connections made through the folklórico family. I have witnessed parents assisting dancers to and other parents to maneuver through medical, legal and educational situations when others do not have the knowledge to do so for themselves.

Resistant capital is developed through the knowledge and skills acquired through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Yosso, 2005). As a dancer and as an instructor I have experienced and seen my dancers experience situations involving ignorant people, who make rude remarks or make fun of folklórico. I have always instilled in our dancers the idea that they are special, and that not everyone can do what they do. As a dancer, they develop a sense of pride and accomplishment that enables them to walk proudly and gracefully through life and maintain the confidence they have developed as dancers.

CCW as a concept has evolved with additional literature. More recently

Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala (2014) using Yosso's (2005) concept of CCW as a starting point discovered four additional forms of capital which are also present in community-based folklórico programs. The capitals include *ganas/perseverance*, ethnic consciousness, spirituality/faith, and pluriversal capital.

Ganas/Perseverance is developed through self-reliance, determination, and inner confidence (Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014) which are all developed through participating in folklórico programs. Dancers work hard to achieve the goal of performing a dance or mastering a step. Achieving these goals requires determination and self-reliance that leads to inner confidence. Ethnic consciousness is developed through performance. Dancers develop a sense of pride in sharing their culture through this art form. In addition, dancers who are more experienced share their knowledge with younger dancers who are learning, and in this way give back to their community. Spirituality/Faith may be emphasized in some folklórico programs. Many programs are created through local churches and have a connection to spirituality or faith. Pluriversal capital is the ability to move in and out of different spaces or environments and to operate successfully within these environments (Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014). Folklórico dancers often adapt their skills from the folklórico setting to work, educational and other settings.

Taking the concept of CCW a step further, Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) used a capital approach to examine funds of knowledge, stating that linking funds of knowledge with capital can provide new insight and understanding of the

educational opportunities and experiences of students. While Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) focused on the link between funds of knowledge and capital, they addressed an important point. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) wonder whether students and families realize they should be activating or mobilizing these capitals to achieve academic or career goals. Identifying and acknowledging community cultural wealth is important. However, the ability to activate or operationalize these strengths is what will benefit students and families when it comes to educational and career goals or life in general.

I believe that folklórico programs are fertile ground for growing the various elements of community cultural wealth from personal experience as both a dancer and as an instructor. I also believe the experiences gained from folklórico programs are a vehicle for operationalizing capital. Through folklórico some of our dancers have experienced their first flight on an airplane, some have experienced their first time leaving the state, or even the county, and some have participated in a folklórico conference at an out of state four-year university.

The concept of CCW guided the interview questions for the various participant groups in this study. In addition, CCW guided the analysis of the data gleaned from individual interview transcripts, the focus group transcript, and document analysis.

Delimitations

There are several delimitations to the study. First, this study will not include Latino folklórico dancers. This study will focus on Latina folklórico

dancers only. Second, this study will focus on participants between the ages of 18 to 40 years old, and will not address generational issues. Third, the participants of this study will be former dancers, and this study will not include experiences of current and active members of the program. Also, although community-based folklórico programs exist throughout California and the United States, this study focused on one community-based folklórico program located in Southern California and did not include professional, school-based, or adult only folklórico programs or folklórico programs in general. Despite these delimitations, the results of this study will add insight into how community based cultural arts programs can influence Latinas to pursue or complete college.

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms will frequently appear throughout this study and may require definition:

- Folklórico – The cultural art of Mexican folk dance.
- Dancer – The words dancer and former dancer or dancers and former dancers are used interchangeably throughout this dissertation.
- Latina – This study encompasses the terms Chicana, Mexican-American, Mexican, and Hispanic. The exception will be the literature review, which will refer to each population as noted by the original researcher.

Summary

This study explored the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program as middle school or high school students. This study also explored how participating in a folklórico program influenced the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all, and finally, this study examined the skills that dancers developed by participating in folklórico programs that were transferable to educational and career goals or life in general.

The next chapter will summarize the literature in several areas. First, research related to the representation of Latinas/Chicanas in higher education. Second, research addressing the college aspirations of Latinas/Chicanas, barriers to these aspirations, and the importance of aspirational capital. Third, research regarding the K-12 school experiences of Latinas/Chicanas. Fourth, research addressing community-based programs, and the role they can play in creating pathways to college, including cultural arts programs and the role of social capital and institutional agents. Finally, existing research on the history and background of the cultural art of Folklórico in Southern California, as well as research related to folklórico programs. The theoretical framework interwoven throughout the literature review and this study is Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth, as well as Rendón, Nora and Kanagala's (2014) expansion of community cultural wealth.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There are five sections in the following literature review. An examination of the representation of Latinas/Chicanas in higher education is the focus of the first section along with data associated with this topic. The second section explores the college aspirations of Latinas/Chicanas, including the hindrances and support structures to their aspirations. The third section discusses the K-12 school experiences of Latinas/Chicanas using an asset-based approach. The fourth section examines the role that community-based programs can play in creating a bridge to college for Latinas/Chicanas, as well as the role of institutional agents and the concept of extended family. Section four also includes an examination of community-based cultural arts programs and their effect on the college-going attitudes of students. The final section discusses community-based Folklórico programs in Southern California and existing research regarding community-based folklórico programs. Finally, the concept of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), will be discussed and interwoven throughout this chapter due to its relevance to previous studies.

This study is focused on Latinas who participated in folklórico programs while in middle school or high school, however, throughout this literature review, the ethnicity of participants will be indicated as stated in the referenced literature (Latino/Latina, Chicano/Chicana, Mexican-American, Hispanic, etc.

Representation of Latinas/Chicanas In Higher Education

In conjunction with The Whitehouse Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, focusing on Latinas in the U. S., Gándara (2015) stated that one in four female students in public schools is Latina, and recent projections indicate that by 2060 Latinas will form nearly one-third of the total female population in the United States. Given their increasing proportion of the general population, studies are needed to examine and ensure the educational success of Latinas.

In 2006, Solórzano and Yosso provided a clear visual of the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline, which demonstrated that out of an estimated 100 Chicana/Chicano students who start elementary school, only 46 graduate high school, and only 26 enroll in college. In addition, out of the 26 that enroll in college, just eight graduate with a Bachelor's degree, two complete a graduate degree, and only .2 complete a doctoral degree. The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (Pérez Huber et al. 2015) provides more recent data that indicate in 2012, out of an estimated 100 Latina elementary school students, only 63 complete graduation with a high school diploma. Additionally, only 13 out of 100 complete a Bachelor's degree, four out of 100 complete a graduate degree, and only .3 complete a doctoral degree. These completion rates are well below Whites, Asian Americans and African Americans (Pérez Huber, Malagón, Ramirez, Gonzalez, Jimenez & Vélez, 2015).

According to the Pew Research Center (2009), Latinos are the largest and youngest minority group in the United States. One in five schoolchildren is Latino/a, and one in four newborns is Latino/a. Although Latinos make up about 18 percent of all youths in the ages 16 to 25 in the United States, in the State of California, they make up 42 percent of all youths in the state (Pew Research Center, 2009). Additionally, within the Latina/o subgroup population, Chicanas attain the least number of Bachelor's degrees as compared to Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans (Pérez Huber et al., 2015; Ojeda & Flores, 2008).

Overall, the report by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (Pérez Huber et al., 2015) demonstrates that only small gains have been made when it comes to educational equity for Latina/os over the past ten years. In addition, in a study by Hurtado-Ortiz and Gauvain (2007) findings indicated that Mexican Americans obtain mostly lower paying jobs, and have less access to career opportunities because they are undereducated in relation to the total population. Because of the career implications resulting from a limited education, it is vital to study processes that can support higher education attainment for Mexican American youth (Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvain, 2007).

College Aspirations of Latinas/Chicanas

It is essential to define the term aspirations when discussing the aspirations of students. In 1989, Quaglia wrote an article discussing the characteristics of instructionally effective schools that indicated student

aspirations was a characteristic that was not generally recognized. The purpose of this article was to emphasize the significance of increasing student aspirations as an element of effective educational approaches. Quaglia (1989) noted that there are many definitions for the word aspirations; dreams goals or ambitions are a few of the terms that are used interchangeably when discussing the aspirations of students; however, he did not believe that just these other words could define aspirations. Quaglia (1989) felt student aspirations could be broadly defined as "what drives individuals to do more and be more than they presently are" (p. 8). In a subsequent article, Quaglia and Cobb (1998) defined student aspirations as "a students' ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals" (Quaglia & Cobb, 1998, P. 130). More recently, and more specifically, Fondon (2005), in a descriptive study on the perception of factors that influence Female Mexican American high school seniors to attend college, stated that "for students, educational aspirations and expectations are defined by how much they hope to attain" (p. 15).

Given the disturbingly low numbers of Latinas/Chicanas who pursue higher education, it is essential to discuss the mismatch between educational outcomes and aspirations of this population. In 2009, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) investigated the barriers that Latinas face to complete high school using surveys, interviews and focus groups. MALDEF and NWLC (2009) found that there was a significant disconnect between the aspirations of Latina's

and the realities they face. Many Latinas had high aspirations, for example, 80 percent of the students surveyed stated that they wanted to graduate from college and go even further; however, they doubted that they would be able to achieve their goals (MALDEF & NWLC, 2009). Though many had aspirations of graduation with a college degree, many felt that at best they would be able to attend a community college, or at worst, not even complete high school (MALDEF & NWLC, 2009). Sadly, one-third of the girls surveyed did not expect to achieve their educational goals (MALDEF & NWLC, 2009).

Consistent with the report by MALDEF and NWLC (2009), the Pew Research Center (2009) prepared a report that explored the attitudes, values, social behaviors, family characteristics, economic well-being, educational attainment and labor force outcomes of young Latinos, using a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 2,012 Latinos. This survey was supplemented by the Center's analysis of government, demographic, economic, education and health data sets.

According to the report, young Latinos place a high value on education, hard work and career success, however, they are much more likely than other American youth to drop out of school and to become teenage parents, live in poverty, and have a high level of exposure to gangs (Pew Research Center, 2009). Nearly all Latino youths (89%) and older adults (88%) agree with the statement that a college degree is vital for getting ahead in life, however, just under half of Latinos ages 18 to 25 say they plan to get a college degree (Pew

Research Center, 2009). The financial pressure to support a family is the reason most given by Latino youth who do not pursue higher education (Pew Research Center, 2009). Additionally, more than two-thirds are of Mexican heritage, and they grow up in families that have on average less “educational capital” than do other Latinos (Pew Research Center, 2009).

Using a quantitative predictive design, Vela, Lenz, Sparrow, and Gonzales (2017) applied a positive psychology framework to research whether positive psychology and family factors had a relationship with the college-going beliefs of Mexican American adolescents. Vela et al. (2017) surveyed 131 Mexican American students enrolled in a South Texas high school. The students surveyed consisted of 76 boys, and 55 girls, who identified as Mexican American, Mexican, or Hispanic. Findings indicated that when it came to the college-going beliefs of Mexican American adolescents, hope was the strongest predictor, and found that the college-going beliefs of Mexican American adolescents increased as the amount of hope increased (Vela et al. 2017). The study also found a connection between Mexican American adolescents who had hope that they could create a positive future, and increased confidence to pursue and persist in higher education.

Latina/o Parents Establishing College Aspirations

In 2015, Zambrana and Burciaga applied several elements of Yosso's (2005) CCW, specifically; familial, social, resistant and aspirational capital to understand how their participants were able to overcome challenges and

succeed academically. Zambrana and Burciaga, (2015) used a mixed methods study with a retrospective, cross-sectional design, and collected data from a large cohort of three hundred Mexican American women who were successful in the navigation of educational pathways from K-12 through higher education. Data were collected in Los Angeles, California during the period 1987-1990 through face to face interviews using a 233 item questionnaire that included both closed-ended and open-ended options, and participants were identified using a network sampling technique using Hispanic, Mexican American, and Chicana professional organizations for women, as well as snowball sampling. Overall, Zambrana and Burciaga (2015) found that parental messages plainly communicated familial, social, and aspirational capital; encouraging their daughters to do well in school to improve their lives beyond their current situation, but parents also wanted their children to continue to be a part of their lives by remaining home. The educational paths of the respondents were significantly influenced by their families' encouragement of persistence in pursuit of higher education. Pedagogies of the home or *educación* were natural transmissions of family values that were instrumental in the persistence and aspirations of the respondents (Zambrana & Burciaga, 2015).

Applying a theory of resiliency, and guided by a social capital framework, Ceja (2004) used qualitative one on one, semi-structured interviews with twenty Chicana seniors enrolled at one inner-city high school in the greater Los Angeles area to understand how Chicana students develop college aspirations through

their interpretations of direct and indirect educational messages from their parents. Only students who were officially listed to attend one of the three college-bound tracks within California were included in the study (Ceja, 2004). Seven students were on the University of California track, seven students were on the California State University track, and six were on the community college track (Ceja, 2004).

Ceja (2004) found that all twenty students mentioned the critical role of parents on academic success and educational aspirations. Some parents shared their belief that education was the way to obtain a better life in this country, other parents encouraged their daughters not to make the same mistakes that they had made, and other parents did not allow any other option (Ceja, 2004). Also, many of the students were well aware of their parents' economic struggles or working conditions, and this knowledge motivated wanting to broaden their educational opportunities after high school.

Consistent with the study by Ceja (2004), Sanchez, Reyes, and Singh (2005) found that parents had a significant and positive impact on the academic success of Mexican American students despite having limited knowledge and experience in higher levels of education. Parents also motivated students who wanted to obtain higher education degrees as a way of giving back to their parents' sacrifices. Siblings also supported students, and in most cases, were older and had previously attended college, this was particularly helpful to students as siblings could provide support directly related to attending college.

Peers were also a vital source of support and included friends, and romantic partners, who seemed to compensate for certain types of educational assistance that student participants were unable to get from their family members (Sanchez et al., 2005).

Additionally, Hurtado-Ortiz and Gauvin (2007) conducted a quantitative study, using Pearson product-moment correlations, of 104 recent high school graduates to investigate how experiences in the family context contribute to the attainment of higher education of Mexican American youth. Of the 104 high school graduates included in this study, one half were attending a two-year college, and the other one half were not enrolled in higher education (Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvin, 2007). Also, independent forward-selection stepwise regression analysis was used for the entire sample to determine the contribution of parental involvement to college attendance (Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvin, 2007). Findings of this study indicated that even though Mexican American parents encourage their children to obtain a college degree, they are unable to help their children with class assignments, and they do not become upset when they do not perform well academically (Hurtado-Ortiz & Gauvin, 2007).

Using narrative analysis, Espino (2016) applied Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth (CCW) to investigate how Mexican American Ph.D. students interpreted their parents' and families' messages regarding education and *educación*, and to what extent these messages from parents' and families about education and *educación* shaped their educational aspirations. Espino

(2016) interviewed two females and five males of Mexican descent who completed their doctoral degrees at five different universities between the years 2005 and 2006. Espino (2016) found that familial, aspirational, and resistant capital was shaped and maintained in the messages about education that were received from parental and familial messages transmitted by stories and *consejos* throughout their lives.

In addition, Valencia and Black (2002) used a case study to illustrate both internal and external involvement in education by Mexican American adults, to debunk the myth that Mexican Americans do not value education. Ten adults from six Mexican American families in Austin Texas, who had resided in Texas for two to five generations and were either bilingual or English speaking, were interviewed. Valencia and Black (2002) stated that deficit thinking refers to the idea that students of color and low social, economic status are not successful in school because they and their families have internal deficiencies or shortfalls that hinder learning. Rather than examining how schools and the political economy are structured, deficit thinking blames the victim for not learning and blames the perceived inability to learn on familial deficits (Valencia & Black, 2002). Espino (2016) concurred with Valencia and Black (2002), in that the mainstream narrative that existed regarding Mexican American communities was that they did not value education. This narrative is pervasive, and it has become an excuse not to support Mexican American communities, despite conflicting evidence (Espino, 2016).

Discounting the narrative that Mexican American communities do not value education, Delgado-Gaitan (1992) used observations, and interviews to collect data on spontaneous parent-child interactions in the home for two hours a day over nine months. Delgado-Gaitan (1992) discounted the deficit hypothesis applied to Mexican-American families, using social science theory to support the view that these families have strengths that are relevant and important to education.

Gloria, Castellanos, and Orozco (2005) also discounted this myth in their study using hierarchical regression analysis to assess the coping responses of 98 second-generation Mexican American women who had expectations to earn a graduate degree. The study examined perceived education barriers, cultural fit, coping responses and psychological well-being (Gloria et al. 2005). Contrary to the persistent myth that Latina/os do not value education, the Latinas in this study valued higher education and aspired to pursue graduate degrees (Gloria et al. 2005).

Espino (2016) noted that Mexican Americans gain knowledge, skills, and abilities from families and communities along their educational journeys and activate their community cultural wealth, even though the dominant culture may not find value in Mexican American culture, language, and traditions. In fact, Rosas and Hamrick (2002) found that adult family members were critical players in predisposing the respondents in their study to attend college by providing early and consistent messaging regarding the expectation of college attendance, and

these students never questioned their ability to attend college. The findings that parents influence and establish college aspirations for their children align with aspirational capital within the framework of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005).

Yosso (2005) stated that “aspirational capital is the ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make such dreams a reality” (p. 77). Storytelling and advice (*consejos*) are often used to develop aspirations within social, familial contexts and can provide ways to challenge oppressive conditions (Yosso, 2005). In other words, even though communities of color may not have the means to reach educational goals, they still allow themselves and encourage their children to dream beyond their current situation. Yosso (2005) further stated that within communities of color, aspirations are often developed within familial and social contexts through storytelling, and advice that affords individuals a means to challenge oppressive conditions.

Nevertheless, college aspirations do not always suffice to foster college enrollment or completion. For instance, Hurtado and Gauvain (1997) conducted a study examining the associations between acculturation, college planning and college attendance in junior and senior high school students of Mexican descent. Ten months after the initial surveys were done, some of the participating seniors were interviewed to find out whether they did go to college, and if they did, what resources helped them to get there (Hurtado & Gauvin, 1997). The results of this

study found that acculturation is not related to college aspirations or college planning behaviors (Hurtado & Gauvin, 1997). The study also determined that the desire to go to college, and college planning behaviors are not necessarily enough to help Mexican American youth achieve the goal of going to college (Hurtado & Gauvin, 1997).

Consistent with the findings by Hurtado and Gauvin (1997) Marquez Kiyama and colleagues (2010), used the concept of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), to prepare a report in conjunction with the Education Task Force of the Ibero-American Action League on the school experiences of Latina/o students. Marquez Kiyama and colleagues (2010) used a mixed methods approach to understand the experiences of marginalized groups using an asset-based, culturally relevant perspective. The setting was the Rochester City School District (RCSD) (Marquez Kiyama et al., 2010). The participants included 41 parents or guardians and 95 current and former students who participated in focus group interviews; also, the researchers used quantitative, non-identifiable, individual student records provided by the RCSD office of research and evaluation.

Marquez Kiyama and colleagues (2010) found that despite evidence that Latina/o students and families have high aspirations for high school graduation and college, there is a disconnect between educational aspirations and expectations.

K-12 School Experiences of Latina/Chicana Students

In her book, *Achieving Equity for Latino Students*, Contreras (2011) stated that the navigational process for Latino students from K-12 to the higher education system comprises several elements that influence the practices, aspirations, successes, and outcomes of students. Several issues directly affect the transition to college for Latino students and college persistence, one being the role of teachers (Contreras, 2011). Through setting the tone in class and the pedagogical methods used to teach, teachers play a critical role in providing students with opportunities to learn and can be role models for students with the power to stimulate and nurture the desire to learn (Contreras, 2011). Contreras (2011) used data collected from a study in the State of Washington of Latino students that included 14 middle and high schools (Contreras et al., 2008). With the use of surveys and interviews, teacher and student data collection occurred concurrently, with 253 teachers participating, 83.4 percent being white; and only 8.3 percent being Mexican American or Latino (Contreras, 2011).

In most of the schools, discussion about college typically happened between the teachers and their students (Contreras, 2011). The majority of teachers (98%) responded that they discussed goals and aspirations for the future with their students, and according to most of the Latino students who responded, teachers were the primary source of college information, as opposed to counselors (Contreras, 2011). Teachers play a critical role in transmitting college information and signals to students; however, teachers can also serve as

barriers to student aspirations about college by sending negative messages or direct communications about a student's ability to attend college, to limit the aspirations of students from particular backgrounds (Contreras, 2011).

Contreras (2011) stressed the importance of peer networks, human resources, community resources, and institutional infrastructure surrounding the student to influence their ability to be successful in the navigation of school.

However, given the disconnect between the educational aspirations and expectations of Latinas/Chicanas, a study of the K-12 experiences of Latina/Chicana students is essential. Zambrana, De Jesus, and Davila (2015) used open-ended questions to gather survey and narrative data that describe the key educational experiences and practices that encouraged the women in their study to excel in successfully navigating K-12 schooling and pursuing college. Approximately 83 percent of the respondents indicated that their schools had a tracking system for college versus lower academic tracks, and these tracks coincided with social class and ethnicity (Zambrana et al., 2015). While 83.1 percent of the students reported being in a college-bound group, 27.4 percent indicated that it was difficult to access the college track. Though the majority of the respondents felt that teachers did encourage education in general, only 67 percent reported that teachers encouraged them to actually attend college (Zambrana et al., 2015).

Further, 56.7 percent of these students reported having close relationships with teachers, and 90% of these students felt that the teachers they had close

relationships with encouraged their education (Zambrana et al., 2015). These students benefited from social and cultural capital because of these relationships. Based on the comments by respondents, some of the teachers did appear to act as bridging institutional agents and provided access to social and cultural capital that supported the students in their development of skills and information networks and encouraged them to prepare for and enter college (Zambrana et al., 2015).

Conflictingly, these supportive relationships occurred within schools where Mexican American young women also dealt with adults who were hostile toward them and their growing identities as achievers (Zambrana et al., 2015). In a testament to their resistant capital, many of the respondents stated that despite the barriers they met in their K-12 experiences, they were able to accomplish their educational goals, and were in fact motivated to counter negative stereotypes of Mexicans (Zambrana et al., 2015). The women in this study challenged and overcame a school system set up to ensure their failure rather than their success (Zambrana et al., 2015).

Using life history research methods, Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel (2003) investigated the accessibility to higher education of Latinas. The study included two groups of Latina students. One group included 12 students who were enrolled at highly selective universities at the time of the study, and ten of the students began their higher education journeys at the community college level. Gonzalez et al. (2003) found that Latina students who had the opportunity to

attend a university immediately after high school accumulated large amounts of social capital starting in elementary school and continuing through high school. Conversely, Gonzalez et al. (2003) found that students who began their post-secondary education journeys at the community college level had typically endured some type of institutional neglect or abuse. Through this study, Gonzalez et al. (2003) determined that ability and potential were not a problem for the community college students, except for the fact that they had limited opportunities throughout their K-12 public education that would have facilitated acceptance directly into a four-year institution. This finding was supported by the fact that the community college students later transferred to the University of California system.

When exploring the educational aspirations of Mexican American high school students, it is important to consider cultural, familial, and contextual variables (Ojeda & Flores, 2008). The finding that students accumulate resources and opportunities during K-12 connects with a study conducted by Ojeda and Flores (2008) which examined the influence that gender, generational level, parents' education level, and perceived educational barriers had on the educational aspirations of 186 Mexican American students attending two public high schools that were predominantly Mexican American in a Texas-Mexican border town. Participants were selected across a variety of science classes, and students completed several surveys that were used in this quantitative study, which used a three-step hierarchical regression analysis to predict educational

aspirations (Ojeda & Flores, 2008). Ojeda and Flores (2008) found that perceived education barriers were the only variable that significantly predicted educational aspirations for students as compared to the influence of gender, generation level or parents' education level.

Supporting the findings of Ojeda and Flores (2008) regarding perceived education barriers, Zalaquett (2005) used written life stories of the participants in his study, to explore the obstacles of Latina/o students' success and also studied the characteristics of the Latina/o students who succeed in high school and are able to transition to higher education. Participants included twelve Latina/o students who were recipients of an urban university's scholarship program for Latinos and were considered representative of the students in the scholarship program according to the scholarship administrator (Zalaquett, 2005). Results indicated that in terms of barriers, the majority of the students received minimal adult guidance when making educational choices, and while their parents were supportive of their educational aspirations, they had no experience with higher education, and could not provide guidance in regards to college (Zalaquett, 2005). Another barrier was that frequently, the students were misinformed about processes and opportunities, which contributed to poor choices (Zalaquett, 2005).

Sanchez et al. (2005) used a social capital framework to conduct qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten Mexican American, first-generation college students, who attended a large urban Midwestern four-year

university that was primarily a commuter campus, and twelve individuals that were considered important sources of guidance and support. Sanchez, Reyes, and Singh (2005) examined the role of important individuals who guided and supported the students' in their academic experiences. Affirming the findings by Zalaquett (2005) regarding lack of adult guidance and misinformation as barriers, Sanchez, et al. (2005) found that institutional agents were only mentioned a few times, and this indicates that Mexican American youths and school personnel are not developing relationships that could promote academic success for these students.

Also, Liou et al. (2009) found that large comprehensive high schools do not support or include Latina/o students in their college-going attitudes, and unfortunately, some of the teachers and guidance counselors in these institutions do not believe that every student should have access to this information. Liou et al. (2009), noted these students develop their own information networks as resources to support their college-going aspirations, and many of these information networks are developed outside of school, they contend that these "high stakes information networks" are informational capital.

Meanwhile, Zalaquett (2005) found that positive factors that contributed to success for these students were; support of family, value of education, responsibility to family, a sense of accomplishment, supportive friends, and financial aid. In addition, external support, such as community support was also a positive factor (Zalaquett, 2005). This finding is consistent with the study by

Gloria et al. (2005) who found that the most frequently used coping response used by Latinas who faced barriers was to talk to friends and relatives. Zalaquett (2005) also determined that community support was a positive factor in contributing to the educational success of the students in his study.

Similarly, Pérez and McDonough (2008), used chain migration theory within a social capital framework to examine the college choice process for Latina and Latino students. Pérez and McDonough (2008) found that student relied on parents, school counselors, siblings, school staff, relative and peers about their plans to go to college. What was striking in this study was how heavily Latina and Latino students relied on individuals they saw as extended family in regards to college information (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). This study emphasized the importance of access to strong networks and strong social capital when it comes to college choice (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Conversely, weak or no networks and little to no access to resources limit choices for Latinas and Latinos.

Moreover, access to community and school-based programs could be an important moderator regarding Latina/o student experiences in higher education because of the positive role that social networks and resources provided by these networks can have for education outcomes (Harris & Marquez Kiyama, 2013).

Community Programs Creating a Bridge to College

Given the lack of college-going resources available to Latina/o students in K-12 schooling, some researchers examined the connections between community-based resources and college. Research shows that relationships or connections with caring adults in schools or community-based programs can be instrumental in influencing a college-going mindset in students. These relationships strengthen the community cultural wealth of students which can be significant to success in higher education.

Harris and Marquez Kiyama (2013) found that a significant theme that arose from the student focus group data of their study was that much of the academic and social support that students received was a result of community and school-based programs. Furthermore, recommendations from Pérez Huber et al. (2015) to promote high stakes engagement for Latino students, included creating an environment that cares about students academic needs. Although the recommendations mentioned are addressing schools, administrators, and staff, some of the recommendations include mentorship programs, college campus visits, and workshops that can assist students in understanding educational attainment and opportunities.

Drawing on the literature regarding institutional agents, *confianza* (trust), and school and community-based programs as a framework, Harris and Marquez Kiyama (2013) analyzed and examined how high school student persistence is affected by connections with caring adults that are encountered both within and

outside of school. Participants consisted of 41 parents or guardians, and 95 current and/or former students (54 female, and 41 males), with 66 percent, identifying as Puerto Rican and the aim was to examine the relationship between school and community-based programs (Harris & Marquez Kiyama, 2013). The findings by Harris and Marquez Kiyama (2013) help to illustrate the relationship between school and community-based programs, caring adults as institutional agents, and Latina/o student persistence. Many students indicated that they were able to stay in school precisely because of adults associated with school and community-based programs, and in some cases support provided by caring adults from school and community-based programs was the only support students had (Harris & Marquez Kiyama, 2013). Additionally, Harris and Marquez Kiyama (2013) noted that findings consistently indicated that school and community-based programs served as "human bridges" (Stanton-Salazar, 2001), or organizational bridges to resources.

Moreover, findings by Sanchez et al. (2005) found that relationships that are developed by college students who are Mexican American, with important individuals in their lives, provide insight into the forms of social capital that are needed to make it in college. This study was different from others of its type in that it examined social support from both the giver and the receivers' perspectives. In addition, Harris and Marquez Kiyama (2013) stated that access to community and school-based programs could be an important moderator regarding Latina/o student experiences in higher education because of the

positive role that social networks and resources provided by these networks can have for education outcomes.

Using qualitative methods, Nelson (2009) applied Flores-Gonzalez's (2002) role identity theory and social capital theory to investigate the role of Out of School Time (OST) program participation in the context of Latina/o youth pathways to college by using data collected from in-depth interviews with forty-seven participants of the Youth Engaged in Leadership Learning (YELL) program. Nelson (2009) found that the path of each participant to higher education was unique, and there were variations in the significance of the role that the YELL program played. Nelson (2009) discovered that there were degrees of embedded influence for participants in the YELL program. Auxiliary influence in students who would have most likely gone on to college in any case, distinguishable influence for some participants who felt that YELL was instrumental in helping them to maintain direction and develop confidence, and finally, transformative influence for participants who were on a negative path when they first joined the YELL program (Nelson, 2009). Nelson (2009) also found that youth identified staff involved in out of school time community programs as necessary in providing emotional support, academic encouragement, and cultural capital as it relates to pathways to college and that students continued to be influenced by this OST program long after they were no longer participating.

Furthermore, Wong (2008) using data from a more extensive ethnographic study, demonstrated the role that community-based organizations play in providing social capital to low-income immigrant youth. The study was done at the site of an out of school time (OST) program, and data were collected using semi-structured interviews, phone, mail and instant messaging correspondence with the participants, follow up interviews, and site document analysis. Wong (2008) referred to community-based organizations as CBOs, and the study was on OST programs provided by CBOs that were academic. Wong (2008) concluded that families, schools, and CBOs must form strong partnerships to ensure that they are all working towards the same goals, and in this way, the role of CBOs can be transformational.

Extended Family within Community Programs

Familial capital involves an obligation to community well being and broadens the concept of family and the understanding of kinship (Yosso 2005). Acknowledging the common understanding of family, familial capital is developed by extended family, which includes our immediate family, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends who are considered *familia* (Yosso, 2005).

Recognizing the concept of extended family, Rosas and Hamrick (2002) used a social phenomenological approach and collected data through semi-structured interviews, and participant observations with seven Latina women who attended a higher education institution in a mid-western state. Rosas & Hamrick (2002) stressed the importance of examining the definitions of family and

considered the different conceptions of family when it comes to students of Mexican descent. In fact, three of the participants used a broader understanding of family that included extended relatives, and some participants purposely included non-relatives in these more general conceptions of family (Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Individuals who were accessible, and provided support, care, and encouragement and maintained regular and meaningful contact with the students consisted of relatives or non-relatives who were considered family (Rosas & Hamrick, 2002). Adult “family” members played a significant role in providing consistent messaging of expectations of college attendance (Rosas & Hamrick, 2002).

Similarly, Liou et al. (2009) found that although school resources were not available to Latina/o students, these students used social capital to obtain necessary information and resources that encouraged their college-going aspirations. These students acquired this social capital within religious organizations, extracurricular activities, community-based organizations, and community-based cultural events (Liou et al., 2009).

Additionally, using Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth model, Liou et al. (2009) included in-depth focus groups, multiple student surveys, observations, and individual interviews with students, teachers, and guidance counselors. Liou et al. (2009) employed a mixed methods study to examine the role that institutional agents and families play in encouraging academic success in low-income Latina/o students in racially segregated, large comprehensive high

schools located in Milwaukee and Los Angeles. In terms of familial capital, (Liou et al., 2009) noted that this term includes extended family, and makes reference to forms of knowledge as well as cultural practices that are gained through these extended family relationships.

Using Social Capital and Institutional Agents to Access College

When considering the notion of using social capital and institutional agents to access college, Yosso (2005) indicates that social capital is an element of community cultural wealth, and states that this form of community cultural wealth consists of networks of people and community resources. Social contacts and community resources can be beneficial to students not only in going through the bureaucratic process of filling out applications and meeting deadlines but also by providing emotional support and confidence in the sense that they can reassure students that they can and should pursue higher education (Yosso, 2005). As Marquez Kiyama, et al. (2010) noted, few Latina/o students and families know the exact steps needed to apply to and obtain a college education, and understanding the steps required not only to graduate high school but to enter college are vital for Latina/o students. The importance of institutional agents was a common thread in the majority of the interviews in the study by Marquez Kiyama et al. (2010), and it often took just one person to help a student understand their potential. When students lack these embedded supports among caring adults available in the community and school-based programs, they are less likely to be successful in school and are at risk of dropping out

(Marquez Kiyama et al. 2010). In another way, these programs serve as local community resources for Latina/o participants because they provide a level of protection from the harmful characteristics of schools that do not support student success (Marquez Kiyama et al. 2010).

Correspondingly, drawing from empowerment theory, and using a social capital framework, Stanton-Salazar (2011), highlighted and demonstrated two important phenomena: Adolescent participation in multiple sociocultural worlds and the role of non-family adult agents in the educational attainment and social development of youth and young adults across class and race. Stanton-Salazar (2011) defines an institutional agent as "an individual who occupies one or more hierarchical positions of relatively high status, either within a society or an institution (or an organization)" (p. 1075). These institutional agents are individuals who possess human, cultural, and social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). These individuals move into the role of institutional agent when they begin to transmit, or negotiate the transmission of resources, opportunities, privileges, and services to benefit others, or uses his or her status, position, authority or reputation to support others who may not have access to these resources due to existing systems of exclusion (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Moreover, Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) examined a subset of data from a multi-method study of social networks and help-seeking practices of Mexican origin adolescents in San Diego. Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003), focused on the analysis of the constraints and social forces preventing youth

from developing forms of social capital through developing social relationships with individuals or agents of different classes who can provide introductions to necessary social support. Data were collected from several communities in San Diego, California and in one urban high school where the students, who were mainly of Mexican origin, attended school. Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) found that it is difficult to find resourceful and caring adults in low resource urban areas, and those that are available face overwhelming need, consequently efforts need to be made to foster community empowerment to support and formalize mentorship (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) referred to informal mentors as those adults in the community who adolescents develop relationships with, who are caring and resourceful, and develop mentorship qualities, but are not formal mentors, meaning that there are no institutional commitments, obligations or accountability associated with this type of mentorship.

To develop informal mentor relationships, we need to integrate local cultural, social and intellectual resources to strengthen the ties between schools and community representatives (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Subsequently, Stanton-Salazar (2011) described bridging agents as individuals that act as human bridges to gatekeepers, to major institutional agents, and to vital social networks who can provide person-to-person introductions and connections.

Outreach Programs

In alignment with the notion of institutional agents, Pitre and Pitre (2009) prepared a study on federal TRIO programs, and indicate that TRIO educational opportunity programs have been successful in increasing higher education attendance rates, as well as, educational attainment for students of low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented ethnic minority backgrounds. In particular, the Upward Bound program had a positive impact on the overall educational aspirations, postsecondary education progress, and student persistence (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Overall the research by Pitre and Pitre (2009) shows that TRIO programs have a positive impact on the aspirations and goals towards college for students, and provide a successful model for college preparation for students who have been historically marginalized.

Furthermore, Pitre and Pitre (2009) suggested that many of the college preparation and transition experiences that students experience in TRIO programs could be replicated quite easily in schools for little to no cost. Pitre and Pitre (2009) also suggest that school leaders could develop college preparation experiences and activities such as; college field trips, information sessions on a college campus, college student panels, and other activities that partner students with university students and staff in various community outreach projects.

Community-Based Cultural Arts Programs

Community based cultural arts programs can also be influential in addressing student persistence in school and encouraging aspirations to attend college. Not all of these programs are directly associated with schools.

Harris and Kiyama (2013) found that the students that were part of their study indicated that access to school and community-based programs were important resources because "School and/or community-based programs were referenced over 150 times by students in over half of the focus group interviews" (Harris & Marquez Kiyama, 2013, p. 10). In fact, community-based programs that had no presence in schools was one of the three types of programs Harris and Marquez Kiyama (2013) characterized in how the participation of Latina/o youth in school and community-based programs influence student persistence in school.

Otterbourg (2000) studied how the arts could enhance after-school programs, and although the study did not specifically address cultural arts, there were interesting findings to note. Otterbourg (2000) found that besides increasing academic achievement and decreasing youth involvement in delinquent behavior, arts programs improve the attitudes of youths about themselves and their futures. Specific findings indicated programs focused on the arts, contribute to improved critical thinking, problem-solving and decision making (Otterbourg, 2000). Arts programs also regularly engage multiple skills

and abilities and foster higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Otterbourg, 2000).

McClain (2004) stated that the importance of non-school organizations should be recognized particularly when it comes to the arts, and that folklórico groups are overlooked as a resource and can highlight arts and learning in significant ways. Community based cultural arts programs, such as folklórico that offer formal instruction and the opportunity to perform are important teaching and learning sites for the arts (McClain, 2004). Also, these types of organizations can help youth negotiate the challenges they may face while growing up in marginalized, minority communities (McClain, 2004).

In alignment with McClain (2004), using a Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, Ersing (2009), examined the role of community-based arts programs. The core underlying principle of PYD focuses on strengths, and not on deficiencies. Ersing (2009) found that cultural arts provide an outlet for self-expression, self-discovery, and the ability to increase self-esteem as youth connect with their peers, adult role models, and community institutions and that community based cultural arts programs can contribute much to the process of developing the capacity of youths.

Along with developing the capacity of youth, if leadership teams within community-based cultural programs were intentional about creating bridges to resources focused on higher education, and focused on developing role models who encouraged post-secondary education, participants of these programs

would gain a consistent support system to help them realize their educational aspirations. One type of community program that would fit nicely into this role would be community-based folklórico programs.

Folklórico

Folklórico programs can be instrumental in supporting Latina students in achieving their educational aspirations. Before discussing research related to the influence of community-based folklórico programs, it is essential to review the history.

A Brief History

According to Sandoval (2012), Mexican folk dance has been in California since the 18th century when California was still part of Mexico or New Spain. Teachers or *maestros* would move from Rancho to Rancho and teach the latest European dance fads to the people (Sandoval, 2012). Dance was an important part of social life, and the people displayed their dance skills at parties and celebrations.

Mexican folk dance was a cultural symbol that assisted in shaping a strong nationalistic spirit during the post-Revolutionary period in Mexico (Nájera Ramírez, 1989). In building a Mexican national identity, attention was given to including the various ethnic groups and segments of society. Folklórico offered one means through which various ethnic groups could be superficially

acknowledged and integrated into the dominant Mexican hegemonic order (Nájera Rámirez, 1989).

A discussion about folklórico would not be complete without discussing Amalia Hernandez and El Ballet Folklórico de Mexico. Amalia Hernandez was a dancer who studied with Sybille of Pavlova's company, Madame Dambree of the Paris Opera, and the American modern dancer Waldsean before creating her own small company in 1952 (Miller, 1988). Hernandez aimed to preserve and promote Mexican culture through dance and music by creating new dances based on anthropological as well as historical research of the people and customs of ancient and contemporary Mexico and was considered a significant authority in determining what was to be considered authentic Mexican folk dance (Nájera Rámirez, 1989). Unfortunately, other folklórico researchers and dancers have felt that she distorted or misrepresented Mexican folklore in the process of creating dances, and that her folklórico was mainly a tourist attraction concerned with public appeal and profit, rather than with preserving and upholding authentic Mexican culture (Hutchinson, 2009; Nájera-Ramírez, 1989; Miller, 1988). Despite her critics, Amalia Hernandez and El Ballet Folklórico de Mexico is recognized as the preeminent folklórico group in Mexico.

In the 1960s, negative attitudes persisted towards Mexicans in the U.S., and the Mexican American population of the United States responded to El Ballet Folklórico de Mexico in a way that was politically transforming of its self-image (Shay, 1999). When folklórico gained recognition in Southern California, it came

out of a struggle for Chicano student rights in the Los Angeles area in the 1960s and became a political statement about Chicanos and the importance of retaining their cultural heritage (Sandoval, 2012). Over the following ten years, at the request of students, middle schools, high schools, and four-year higher education institutions included folklórico classes as part of their offerings in the Los Angeles area (Sandoval, 2012). Also, folklórico groups affiliated with universities were often involved in recruitment efforts to attract Chicanos (Sandoval, 2012). The rationale being that the presence of folklórico groups on a university campus showed that higher education was possible for Chicanos and that once they enrolled, they would be around a positive cultural environment. Unfortunately, the spread of folklórico as part of the curriculum in K-12 schools did not necessarily spread to all areas of Southern California, nor did every local university have folklórico groups that recruited Chicano students.

Currently, although negative attitudes towards people of Mexican descent still exist, participants of community-based folklórico programs do not typically view folklórico as a political statement. Sandoval (2012) stated that there are two predominant schools of training for folklórico; one in the model of Amalia Hernandez and El Ballet Folklórico de Mexico and the other a more holistic format that endeavors to preserve the original purpose and intent of the dances. Sandoval (2012) maintained that the latest group of folklórico companies came to be because of dancers from Los Angeles studying under Amalia Hernandez during the 1990s, who returned and formed professional folklórico companies.

However, there have been community-based folklórico groups in Southern California for over 40 years, many of them continue to exist due to volunteers and are created by parents who wanted their children to experience their culture through folklórico.

Rodriguez (2009) critiqued the practice of folklórico in the United States, stating that because folklórico is rehearsed, choreographed and performed in a manner similar to musical theater, it has produced a space for cultural transmission that is not experienced in a lived manner. This approach is often deficient in cultural information and is passed on to students without critical analysis (Rodriguez, 2009). Even so, Rodriguez (2009) stated that the folklórico group he was involved in afforded him an incredibly positive space for learning, developing talent, and skills, building community and improving self-esteem.

Influence of Folklórico Programs

Using an ethnographic narrative study on a folklórico program, McClain (2004) suggested that folkloric dance companies are sites of arts and learning. Even though they have a global presence, dance groups have seldom been explored as educational phenomena (McClain, 2004). McClain (2004) collected data from observations, in-depth interviews, and documents while attending weekly rehearsals, key performances, and an annual banquet over the span of one year from a folklórico dance group she called "El Folklórico."

More specific to the topic of this study, McClain (2004) found that "El Folklórico," a community-based organization exemplified the kinds of knowledge

and skills that exist in many communities, and had a learning environment that provided opportunities for the dancers to develop self-discipline, engagement, and commitment. Accordingly, adults that are associated with programs such as folklórico represent sources of community knowledge and can assist and contribute to showing schools effective ways to work with parents from the community (McClain, 2004). Furthermore, McClain (2004) found that the dancers became immersed in the experience of being Mexican American, and the experience was positive. A respondent in the study by Rosas and Hamrick (2002) mentioned that she had been an active participant in a ballet folklórico group since the age of five, and noted that this was a positive experience. Folklórico was an important part of her life and dancing in a folklórico group allowed her to share her culture with others and spend time with her family who was all involved in the same folklórico group (Rosas & Hamrick 2002). Moreover, McClain (2004) stated, "In the Mexican American community, the extended family is the bedrock social unit (p. 53)", and in this case, as occurs in many folklórico programs, the folklórico members considered each other family.

Underscoring the importance of extended family, Pérez (2016) used *testimonios* positioned within a Latin Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) framework, and explored further through Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth (CCW) framework, to explore the relationships to ethnic identity and cultural heritage through folklórico of three queer Mexican American men. Consistently throughout the testimonios, each participant referred to their folklórico family, and

how this extended family made an impact on the strong and healthy identities, they developed while being part of folklórico. Pérez (2016) stated that folklórico could provide an additional avenue for youth to accumulate cultural capital within a family environment, even when they are not at home, and given the social systems that make student success a struggle, "additional family structures are valuable" (p. 45).

Revisiting Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth, Pérez López (2017) maintained that folklórico embodies the six elements of community cultural wealth. Pérez López (2017) stated that each element of community cultural wealth: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational and resistance capital were found within the *testimonios* of each participant in his study, and the participants were able to bring this cultural capital into the workplace and other environments. Pérez López's (2017) research is important because the development of these forms of cultural capital through folklórico could be instrumental in encouraging young women to pursue higher education.

Summary

The present dissertation study aims to investigate the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program. In addition, this study aims to understand how participation in a folklórico program influenced the college and careers aspirations of Latinas, and finally, this study aims to examine the development of skills while participating in a folklórico program that are transferable to education and career goals, or life in

general. Research specifically related to the relationship between community-based folklórico programs and post-secondary education is limited.

This chapter summarized the literature regarding the representation of Latinas/Chicanas in higher education. This chapter also explored the college aspirations of Latinas/Chicanas, barriers to these aspirations, and the importance of aspirational capital. Studies pertinent to the K-12 school experiences of Latinas/Chicanas were also included in this chapter. In addition, the role that community-based program can play in creating a bridge to college, and the importance of familial capital, as well as, social capital was examined, as well as, the importance of community-based cultural arts programs. Finally, a brief history of folklórico programs in southern California was provided as well as an examination of the research related to community-based Folklórico programs. Throughout this chapter, the concept of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005; Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014) was interwoven due to its relevance to the previous studies that were presented. Because of this relevance to previous studies, and the relevance to folklórico, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005; Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014) will be the theoretical framework in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design and methodology of this study. The purpose of this case study was to investigate the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who were involved in a community-based folklórico program. In addition, this study sought to understand how folklórico programs influenced the college and career aspirations of Latinas. Finally, this study sought to understand the skills developed in folklórico programs that are transferable to educational and career goals or life in general.

To achieve the purpose of this study, I examined the following questions:

1. What were the post-secondary and career aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program during middle school and/or high school?
2. How does participating in a folklórico program influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all?
3. What skills do dancers develop by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to educational and career goals or life in general?

Research Design

There is limited research related to folklórico programs and higher education. The current research on Folklórico has confirmed the development of

skills through participation in folklórico programs, as well as the accumulation of community cultural wealth that occurs within folklórico programs. However, no current studies focus specifically on the college and career aspirations of folklórico dancers, and how folklórico programs can influence these aspirations. In addition, though other studies have confirmed the development of skills while participating in folklórico programs, there is limited research that demonstrates how these skills are transferable to college, career or life goals.

I will use the active voice in my role as the researcher in this study due to my involvement and experience as a folklórico instructor for the last thirty years. This study is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm (Glesne, 2011). The research purposes in the interpretivist approach are to contextualize, understand, and interpret (Glesne, 2011). This approach is appropriate, as I wanted to understand the college aspirations of Latinas who were participants of a community-based folklórico program while they were in middle school and high school.

The present study is a case study. According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010), a case study is conducted to examine a particular phenomenon. Additionally, Stake (1995) states that people and programs can be prospective cases. A case is a bounded system and an integrated system that includes a boundary and working parts (Stake, 1995). More specifically Stake (1995) states that when a researcher has an inquiry, a perplexity, or a need for broad understanding, and feels that he or she may get insight into the issue by studying

a particular case, the researcher would call their work an instrumental case study. With instrumental case studies, the case helps us to understand phenomena or connections within it (Stake, 1995). In this dissertation, the case study was instrumental in that I was trying to understand why Latinas of this program did not pursue or complete college after high school, nevertheless, this study resulted in learning about matters that could be important to other folklórico programs, the folklórico community, and local colleges or universities.

Moreover, Stake (1995) notes, “in case study work there is an abiding tension between the case and the issues” (p. 25). Thus, although this is an instrumental case study, I also had an intrinsic interest in the case. What is of most importance in this study was the issue; however, the case itself was significant as well. In particular, this case study was important to me, as I would like to see enhancements to community-based folklórico programs.

I submitted my proposed research study to the Institutional Research Board (IRB), and received an approval letter to begin my study. (Appendix A).

Research Setting

For case study research, a site or sites is selected to study; sites can be programs, events, processes, activities, individuals or several individuals (Creswell, 2013). The site of this case study is a nonprofit community-based folklórico program located in Southern California that has been around for over thirty years. The economic status of participants range from low-income to upper middle class, and because of this, the program offers scholarships for dancers in

need. Participants pay a membership fee of \$35 per month, which includes the use of costumes provided through a costume bank to all dancers who are ready to perform. The costume bank exists to ensure that no dancer who is ready to perform is unable to perform simply because they cannot afford the costumes, which are quite expensive. Young dancers grow so quickly that it can become a hardship for parents to keep up with the cost of costumes. Fortunately, for the participants of this group, costuming is not a worry.

The directors, officers, and instructors of the folklórico program serve voluntarily and receive no compensation for their efforts. The folklórico program survives on membership fees, fundraisers, and performance fees. Something as simple as an increase in rent is cause for anxiety in terms of how the folklórico program will continue to survive. Currently, the folklórico performs at local schools, community events, county fairs, the local country club, and various other venues. Some of the more exciting places the folklórico has performed at over the years are the Hollywood Bowl, Disneyland, and Disney World.

Instruction is broken up into four age groups, and each group is referred to by group number. The dances learned in each age group become progressively complicated and challenging. Dancers, who are approximately age five through seven, begin in group 1. Dancers, who are approximately age eight through twelve, either promote to group two or start in group two. Dancers, who are approximately age thirteen to sixteen, either promote to group three or start in group three — finally, dancers who are seventeen and older either promote into

or start in group four. The age groups are a guideline, as the ability of dancers is also taken into account for placement. There are high expectations for every group, and they are the same. Learn the steps, learn the dance, learn the choreography and learn to work together with your fellow dancers. In addition, each dancer learns information about the region, the type and title of the music and the costume associated with that region as they learn each dance. Each group learns a separate dance differentiated by the degree of difficulty for each region so that the folklórico can present a suite of dances from each region. Each dancer must master these elements and demonstrate they have mastered each element at a rehearsal before they receive the appropriate costume and can perform. Dancers must also retain this knowledge to move to different dances or regions and maintain the quality of these elements throughout their time in the folklórico program to be able to promote to more advanced groups.

Research Sample

Yin (2018) defines a participant as “a person from whom case study data are collected, usually through interviews” (p. 287). Participants are also referred to as informants when a case study participant provides vital information on interpretations about the case and may recommend other sources of evidence to the researcher (Yin, 2018). There were 22 participants in this study. To address each of the research questions, eight women who participated in this specific program agreed to participate in this study. Each of the women had been dancers in the program and have taken varied educational paths since then.

Seven of the participants did immediately attend college after high school; only one did not, and she attended vocational school later in life for a very short time and did not complete. However, of the seven that pursued college immediately after high school, their experiences, and outcomes varied. Additional information about the participant demographics is presented in the next chapter because the demographic information is interconnected to the findings. I selected the participants to gather data specific to Latinas who were participants in a folklórico program and explore their aspirations during their middle school and high school years. Also, the participants were selected to gather data to explore how participating in a folklórico program influenced their college and career aspirations, and what skills they developed by participating in a folklórico program that were transferable to education and career goals as well as life in general.

I used multiple sampling strategies to recruit participants. I used purposeful sampling to select individuals and sites that could purposefully inform the research problem (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, other sampling methods that I used in this study were criterion, network/snowball, and convenience sampling. I used criterion sampling to select the former dancers that I interviewed. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2008), this form of sampling is used to identify and understand cases that are rich in information. The former dancers who participated were:

- Latina.

- Currently between the ages of 18 and 38. I modified the age group to between the ages of 18 and 40 due to interest expressed by former dancers who were just outside the original age group through the IRB process.
- Participated in the case study folklórico program while they were in middle school or high school.
- Participated in the program while between the ages of 12 to 18.

Interviewing former dancers who met these criteria provided valuable insight into how their aspirations developed during this timeframe. In addition, the selection of former dancers ensured that I did not distract or intrude on the program during the time allocated for rehearsals or lessons. It was essential to interview former dancers who participated in the program for at least two consecutive years because typically when a dancer starts in this program, the first year is very focused on learning steps, choreography, schedules and processes. They are also becoming familiar with the music and the costumes, and their primary goal is to be able to perform. Dancers usually become comfortable with the technical aspects of the program in the first year of participation. They have also begun performing and begin to develop relationships with fellow dancers, parents, instructors, and directors. To reach former dancers, I used social media to post a flyer (Appendix B) announcing the study that included the criteria and contact information for anyone interested. I used network sampling by asking others to share the information with individuals who might be interested in participating.

Glesne (2011) states that most qualitative approaches rely on a combination of methods for acquiring data, and while multiple data-collection methods are the most common type of triangulation in qualitative research, triangulation also refers to the inclusion of various kinds of data sources, in this study not just former dancers, but parents and leadership team were interviewed. A parent of each of the former dancers was interviewed to address each of the questions from an alternative perspective. One parent chose not to participate. The inclusion of parents as participants helped to gain perspective based on the parent's point of view. In addition, research indicates that parents have a significant influence on educational aspirations (Ceja, 2004; Sanchez et al. 2005; Zambrana & Burciaga, 2015). For the selection of parents of former dancers, the sampling method that was used was network or snowball sampling. Creswell (2013), states that snowball sampling identifies cases of interest from people who know other people, who know cases that might be helpful. Snowball sampling was especially useful when selecting the parent or guardian to interview, as I asked each of the former dancers if their parents or guardians would be willing to participate and obtained contact information from them. Four of the parents contacted me directly after speaking with their daughters. I contacted the other three parents through Facebook messenger or text.

In seeking to understand this folklórico program influences the aspirations of young Latinas and to explore the transferable skills that develop by participating in folklórico programs, I also included the current leadership of this

folklórico program as participants. Folklórico leaders had to be current instructors, directors or officers of this community-based folklórico program located in Southern California. The current leadership of the folklórico program offers a unique perspective as they are present during the majority of activities and as leaders come to know each of the dancers well as they watch them progress through the program. The leadership perspective assists in triangulating the data collected from the other participant groups. Glesne (2011) states that convenience sampling has little credibility and is unsuitable for a research study. However, I used convenience sampling in this case because this study will be a case study of a specific program. It was necessary to use convenience sampling in selecting the leadership of the folklórico, and in conjunction with the other types of sampling methods and participants used in this study, it was appropriate. I included the entire leadership team of the program in this study; fortunately, all of the leadership team members were willing and able to participate.

Data Collection

Yin (2018) states that case studies are about phenomena within their real-world contexts and because of this, the process of data collection raises important issues and makes appropriately designed field procedures vital. Laboratory experiments, survey questionnaires, or the investigations of historical archives are all situations where the researcher carefully controls the formal data collection activity (Yin, 2018). The collection of data for case studies is much

different, in that the researcher must cater to the participants' schedules, availability, and not their own (Yin, 2018).

First, to gain access and permission to conduct this study, I sought approval from the gatekeeper (Creswell, 2014) of the folklórico program. I prepared a proposal and submitted it to the director of the folklórico program for review that explained why the site was chosen, what activities would occur during the study, how the results would be reported, and what would be gained from the study, as well as addressed whether the study would be disruptive to the program (Creswell, 2014). I received permission from the Director of the program to proceed with the study.

Semi-structured interviews consist of specified questions but allow for the ability to follow leads that arise during the interview and the ability to probe deeper to pursue all points of interest (Glesne, 2011). I used semi-structured, individual interviews to interview former dancers to investigate the college aspirations of these women while they participated in folklórico, whether the folklórico program did or could have influenced their college aspirations, the impact of the folklórico on their lives in general, and the development of transferable skills while participating in folklórico (Appendix C). I also used semi-structured, individual interviews to interview a parent of each of the former dancers to investigate the college aspirations of their daughters while they participated in folklórico. The parent interviews also explored whether the folklórico program did or could have influenced their daughters' college

aspirations, as well as, the impact of the folklórico program in their daughters' lives in general. Finally, the parent interviews examined the development of transferable skills while their daughters participated in folklórico from the parents' perspective, as well as how this folklórico program could foster college aspirations (Appendix C).

I informed all participants that participating in the research study was voluntary and that they were free to remove themselves from the study at any time. I provided consent forms before interviews began, and assured the participants of confidentiality (Appendix D). Each of the interviews was audio recorded, and I made observational notes during the interviews to include in the analysis of the data. I conducted the interviews at a location selected by the participants to ensure their convenience and comfort. Four of the former dancers interviewed at my home, three of the former dancers interviewed in their homes, and one of the former dancers interviewed through zoom. Also, four of the parents interviewed at my home, and three interviewed in their homes. The protocol used for the interviews ensured standard procedures for each interview, and there were no deviations from the protocol during the interviews. I thanked each of the participants individually to acknowledge their time and consideration (Creswell, 2014). The interview questions used were semi-structured and allowed for probes to explain ideas in more detail or to elaborate on responses, (Creswell, 2014),

I conducted a focus group interview with the leadership team of the

folklórico program. Focus groups allow participants to share experiences, remind each other of events that have occurred and maintain conversations, which will provide a range of experiences (Johnson, 2002). All members of the leadership team were able to participate and included directors, instructors, and officers. Some of their roles overlap. The focus group Interview was audio recorded, and I made observational notes during the interview to use for future analysis of the data. The focus group took place at the home of the director of the folklórico program. The protocol used for the focus group interview included a final thank you statement to acknowledge the participants time and consideration (Creswell, 2014). I conducted one focus group interview with the leadership of the program with very general and broad questions conducive to multiple voices in a focus group environment (Appendix C).

In addition, I asked members of the leadership team to take home a journal, and asked them to write about their thoughts and ideas in response to questions provided (Appendix C). The questions explored the influence that the folklórico programs have on the aspirations of participants and the development of skills that are transferable to education and career goals or life in general. Answers to the questions provided required thought, and I believe I received more in-depth responses because each person had time to think about their response to each question. The leadership team members returned the journals to me within four weeks, and I made myself available for individual follow up discussions. Four members of the leadership team submitted handwritten journals, while three

members of the leadership team opted to use Microsoft Word. Although none of the leadership team members requested a follow-up discussion, I did submit a modification to IRB to include follow up interview questions to confirm understanding and probe further. However, upon review of the data collected, I determined that follow up interviews were unnecessary.

Glesne (2011) states that documents can help to develop innovative directions for observations and interviews, and can provide historical, demographic, and other helpful information. The documents I reviewed were the program mission statement, bylaws, guidelines, meeting agendas and minutes. These documents were pertinent to understanding the structure and operation of the folklórico program, as well as the journals submitted by the leadership team. Glesne (2011) states, documents can support or challenge interview data, pattern analysis, content analysis, and can also provide information for thick description. I reviewed and analyzed documents to obtain collect data from an additional perspective and for the purposes discussed by Glesne (2011). I reviewed the journals to determine from a leadership perspective how folklórico programs influence the educational and lived experiences of dancers concerning college and career aspirations, and the development of skills while dancers participate in folklórico programs that can transfer to education and career goals or life in general.

Data Analysis

Saldaña (2016) states that coding should be started as soon as data is collected and formatted, not after all fieldwork has been completed. I transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews and focus group first by reading the responses into Dragon Speak software. I reviewed and edited the transcriptions to ensure standard formatting of questions and answers. I reviewed the transcriptions a second time while listening to the audio recordings from start to finish and made corrections to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions. I reviewed the transcriptions a third time by listening to the audio recording to ensure accuracy from start to finish. There was one final review of the transcripts to replace all actual names with pseudonyms. The replacement of actual names with pseudonyms included not only the participants but also any person mentioned throughout the interviews. I sent the transcriptions out for member checks to each of the participants. One participant requested that I remove a portion of one of her answers, as she did not like the way she sounded. Another participant corrected one word that was transcribed incorrectly (unfair vs. umm, fair). One former dancer and one parent followed up with additional information after member checking, which I added to the transcripts. The remaining participants did not respond after repeated attempts to contact them. I did some preliminary coding as I received each transcript back from member checking. For those participants who did not return transcripts, I waited four weeks before

preliminary coding to ensure additional time because I wanted to be sure that I gave adequate time for participants to comment or provide feedback.

I used an inductive approach to code the collected data. I hand coded the data using Excel to display the collected data. I used several forms of coding in the analysis of the data but primarily used In Vivo coding. Saldaña (2016) states that In Vivo coding is appropriate for almost all qualitative studies, but it is particularly suitable for studies that prioritize and honor the voice of the participant. Also, In Vivo coding can be used alongside other coding methods (Saldaña, 2016). One such coding method is process coding, which I also used in this study. Saldaña (2016) states that process coding is appropriate for most qualitative studies, particularly for those that search for the routines and rituals of human life, and should be used alongside other coding methods. I also used causation coding. Saldaña, (2016), states that the goal of causation coding is to find, extract and or infer causal beliefs from qualitative data including; interview transcripts, participant observation field notes and written survey responses (Saldaña, 2016).

Saldaña (2016) suggests keeping a record of emergent codes in a separate file or a codebook. A codebook would include the codes, their content description, and a brief example for reference. Having a codebook or list of codes keeps the data available to organize and reorganize the codes into major categories and subcategories (Saldaña, 1995). A codebook or list of codes also provides a comparative list if there are multiple participants and sites (Saldaña,

2016). I created an Excel spreadsheet to serve as a codebook for this study. Also, I kept a separate handwritten codebook that included my thoughts during the process. Saldaña (2016) also suggests the use of analytic memo writing to document reflections on coding processes and code choices, how the process of inquiry is taking shape, and the emergent patterns, categories, subcategories, themes, and concepts in the data. I used analytic memo writing while coding the data.

After I completed the initial coding, the construction of themes took place. I combined the initial codes to develop patterns, categories, and subcategories. For example, when exploring the aspirations of former dancers, I initially coded the data by the type of aspiration; higher education, career or life in general. Delving deeper into the high education aspirations, I categorized the data by those who attended college and those who did not. I further coded the categories into subcategories such as encouragement to attend college, messaging to attend college, and knowledge necessary to attend college. As I analyzed the data, themes and concepts began to emerge. For example, it was clear from the data that all of the former dancers aspired to attend college in some form. What became apparent was former dancers who also received consistent messaging, and necessary information attained a college degree in a reasonable amount of time. It was also clear those former dancers who did not have consistent messaging, or the necessary information along with

encouragement either did not attend, did not complete or extended the time it took to attain a degree. For example:

“She was always focused on going to college. She realized she wasn’t very good at math, so that was out. In fact, one of the reasons she chose the university she did was because they don’t require math. You have to take a language, or you can take a language instead of math, and then there’s some other requirements.” (Parent, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

The former dancer in question had completed a college degree. I initially categorized this quote as “aspirations.” I then created subcategories, and this quote ended up in “attended and completed college.” I then broke the subcategories down further, and for this quote came up with several

- Family College History > Encouragement > Messaging > Knowledge > College Aspirations
- Math as a Barrier > Parent knowledge > Choices > Success
- Math as a Barrier > No Knowledge > No Choices > No College

I continued to break other quotes down in the same way and grouped the codes together. I then reflected on the various codes that emerged and made notes. I continued to refine the notes and finally developed analytical memos that I shaped into paragraphs complete with the analysis of the quote:

As young Latinas, encouragement knowledge and consistent messaging were essential for the participants to achieve their aspirations. Karina’s

mother Tina had the knowledge needed to ensure that Karina was successful in college despite her difficulty with math. Difficulty with math would be a significant barrier for a family who has no knowledge of higher education or how to navigate the system.

I continued this process to construct themes to identify how folklórico programs influenced the educational and lived experiences of the former dancers in general, and with regard to the college and career aspirations, as well as what their aspirations for college, career, and life, in general, were during the time they were in the folklórico program. In addition, the coding process helped to identify the skills that were developed while the former dancers' participated in the folklórico program, and how these skills were transferrable to educational, career or life goals.

Trustworthiness

When it comes to case study data collection, the necessity of using multiple sources for evidence far exceeds the sources of evidence required for other research methods such as experiments, surveys, or histories, and this a significant strength in case study data collection (Yin, 2018). Findings or conclusions in a case study based on various sources of information that follow a singular convergence are more convincing and accurate (Yin, 2018). Multiple sources of evidence provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon, and when data is triangulated, the case study findings are strengthened (Yin, 2018). I triangulated this case study well, as I used multiple sources of evidence.

Glesne (2011) states that it is important for the researcher to consider what is to be learned carefully, and to choose techniques that are most likely to obtain data necessary to increase understanding of the phenomenon in question and provide different viewpoints on the issue being studied. In addition, the use of multiple ways of collecting data can enhance research trustworthiness and a sense of authenticity (Glesne, 2011). Following the suggestions of Glesne (2011) to strengthen research trustworthiness and a sense of authenticity, in this qualitative case study, I employed the use of semi-structured individual interviews, a focus group interview, and document collection. The use of multiple methods aligns with Yin's (2018) argument that a collection of data from multiple sources can corroborate the same finding as data triangulation. Another form of trustworthiness that I employed was member reflections. Tracy (2010) refers to member reflections as a form of trustworthiness. Member reflections take several forms such as member checks, member validation, and host verification (Tracy, 2010). Each of these practices intends to demonstrate the correspondence between the researcher's findings and the understandings of the participants involved in the study (Tracy, 2010). Tracy (2010) states that member reflections are more of an opportunity for collaboration and reflexive elaboration than a test of research findings.

I also used rich, thick descriptions in this study. Tracy (2010) states that thick descriptions are one of the most important ways to achieve credibility in qualitative research. To illustrate the complexity of data, researchers should

provide enough detail that readers can reach their own conclusions, rather than be told what to think (Tracy 2010). Also, Erlandson et al. (1993) state that when descriptions are very detailed, researchers enable readers to transfer information to other settings. Readers could translate these findings to other sites or programs. (Erlandson, 1993).

Yin (2018) notes that in the past, case study data were embedded in the text presented in case study reports comingling the narrative of study with the author's interpretations of the data making it difficult for a critical reader of the case study to inspect the raw data that led to the conclusions in a case study. Though the use of a case study database is not yet a universal practice, it can be an essential tool for case study research (Yin, 2018). The purpose of the case study database is to preserve the collected data in a retrievable form. The case study database should include notes, documents, tabular materials, and narratives. The creation of a case study database can significantly increase the reliability of an entire case study (Yin, 2018). Also, Stake (1995) states that a case study researcher should always be able to demonstrate the progress of the study. I used Microsoft Excel to create a case study database that met all of the elements described by Yin (2018) as well as document files and computer audio files of the interviews. This case study database demonstrates the progress of the case as recommended by Stake (1995).

Positionality of the Researcher

“Being attuned to positionality is being attuned to intersubjectivity; how the

subjectivities of all involved guide the research process, content, and ideally, the interpretations (Glesne, 2011, p. 158).” I am a second-generation Mexican American woman who does not speak Spanish. I have been involved in the cultural art of folklórico since the age of 12. I have been a member of a community-based folklórico program for over 40 years. My parents began taking me to folklórico classes when I was 12 years old. I became an instructor over 30 years ago and continue to teach to this day.

I pursued higher education through night school at Crafton Hills College and California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) where I received a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance in 1990. In 2002, I received a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from CSUSB. I did not have many resources when I began my pursuit of higher education, and my parents were not able to help through the process. It was necessary also to keep a full-time job throughout my college journey as I was married and had two young children. I believe that the self-discipline, commitment, self-confidence, and problem-solving skills I obtained through being involved in a folklórico program were instrumental to my success in the pursuit and attainment of higher education, my career, and life in general. My experiences inform my perception of the present case study.

Having been involved in folklórico for these many years, I have come to know many young women dancers. In some cases, I have been their instructor from the time they were five years old, through adulthood. Over the years, many

of these dancers have not gone to college or completed college. The fact that many of the dancers do not pursue higher education troubles me, as many of them go into minimum wage jobs. It was as if they felt college was not something they could pursue even though they are intelligent and capable. I believe that the skills developed while participating in a folklórico program can have a positive impact on these young women in encouraging the pursuit of higher education. I also believe that folklórico programs can make up for some of the lack of guidance these students may be experiencing in school.

I was able to develop comfortable relationships with the former dancers, parents, and current leadership of the folklórico program. Each interview resulted in laughter and some tears, but every conversation ended with fond memories of the folklórico, and that timeframe of their lives. Peshkin (1988) advocates for "the enhanced awareness resulting from formal systematic monitoring of the self" (p. 20). It was necessary to self-monitor my subjectivity throughout the research process, and I continued to check my subjectivity throughout this study, as I was quite aware of my closeness to the subject. I also kept a reflexive journal to self-monitor my subjectivity throughout the research process.

Because I am currently an instructor for a folklórico program, and I have been involved in the art of folklórico for over forty years, I believe that I was able to develop a positive rapport with former dancers, parents, and with the leadership of this community-based folklórico program. I was able to create a

relationship of trust and was able to obtain truthful and honest information from the participants during interviews.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the college aspirations of Latinas who were involved in a community-based folklórico program within the broader context of the representation of Latinas in higher education. In addition, this study sought to understand how participating in folklórico programs influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all. Finally, this study examined the skills that dancers develop by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to their education, career and life goals.

The present study was an instrumental case study. I employed individual semi-structured interviews as the primary instrument of data collection, as well as a focus group and document collection and analysis. I coded the data to develop themes pertinent to the research questions.

Chapter four details the themes and concepts developed through the coding and analysis of the data collected from the former dancers lived experiences as well as the data gleaned from the parents and leadership of the folklórico.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the case study of a Southern California community-based Folklórico organization. The purpose of this case study was to investigate the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who were involved in a community-based folklórico program within the broader context of the representation of Latinas in higher education. Also, this study sought to understand how folklórico programs influenced the college and career aspirations of Latinas. Finally, this study sought to understand the skills developed in folklórico programs that are transferable to educational and career goals or life in general.

Results of the Study

The theoretical framework guiding this case study was Yosso's (2005) concept of community cultural wealth. As noted in Chapter 2, community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) includes aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital and resistant capital. In addition, I kept in mind that more recent studies have also incorporated '*Ganas*'/Perseverance capital, ethnic consciousness capital, spirituality/faith capital and pluriversal capital (Rendón, Nora, & Kanagala, 2014). Furthermore, the suggestions by Rios-Aguilar were addressed when it comes to not only the acknowledgment of capitals, but also the ability to operationalize capitals.

Qualitative data were collected that included a focus group, semi-structured individual interviews, and document collection. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality. The data was then organized and analyzed by using in vivo, process and causation coding. The aim was to address the following research questions situated within the broader context of the representation of Latinas in higher education:

- What were the post-secondary and career aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program during middle school and/or high school?
- How does participating in a folklórico program influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all?
- What skills do dancers develop by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to educational and career goals or life in general?

Organization of the Findings

The findings of this study are organized in the following way: First, I honored the voices of the participants by sharing their journeys of growing up while participating in folklórico, including their middle school and high school experiences. The findings explore the journey of eight former dancers who participated in this case study by sharing their stories and emphasizing their stories with their own words. I compared and contrasted their stories with the perspective of their parents throughout this narrative to triangulate the data. The

former dancers' stories begin to address part of the first research question, which was to explore the post-secondary and career aspirations of Latinas who participated in community-based folklórico program during middle school and/or high school.

Next, by drawing information from the narratives of each dancer as well as the input from their parents, and the leadership team, I address the remaining research questions. The focus will be on how participating in folklórico programs influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all, as well as what skills dancers developed by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to educational and career goals or life in general.

Demographics of Participants

There were three groups of participants in this study. The primary participant group was former dancers. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of this group of participants. There were eight female participants in the former dancer sample. Each of the previous dancer participants was between the ages of 18 and 40 and had participated in the folklórico while in middle school or high school for at least two consecutive years. Only one of the former dancers pursued college immediately after high school and completed a Bachelor's degree. One of the former dancers did not pursue college at all. Two of the former dancers pursued college immediately after high school and are currently attending college. Two former dancers immediately attended college after high

school; however, they both exited college and did not earn a degree. One participant was planning to start a culinary arts vocational school, and the other opted not to finish college. Finally, two of the dancers did not pursue college immediately after high school, but did enter college later in life, attended college off and on, and eventually completed a Bachelor's degree.

Table 1

Participant Data – Former Dancers

Name	Age	Self-Identity	HS Grad	College	College Grad	Folk Years
Gina*	32	Chicana	2003	Yes	2017	16
Hannah*	34	Mexican-American	2002	No	N/A	11
Isabel*	30	Mexican-American	2006	Yes	2014	22
Jasmine*	22	Mexican-American	2014	Ongoing	Est 2019	12
Karina*	30	Latina	2007	Yes	2010	10
Laura*	21	Latina	2015	Ongoing	No Est	11
Nancy	26	Mexican	2010	Yes	No	12
Olivia*	39	Jehovah's Witness	1998	Yes	No	16

Note: Participant data collected via individual semi-structured interviews September and October 2018

The second group of participants was the parents of the former dancers interviewed in the first sample. Six of the parents were the mothers of the former

dancers, and one was the father of a former dancer. (Table 1 identifies former dancers whose parents participated in this study with an asterisk by their name).

The final group of participants was the leadership team. The leadership team consisted of volunteers who were parents of current dancers except for one person. Six participants of the leadership team were women, and one leadership team member was a man.

There were many interconnections between the various participants in this study illustrated in Figure 1. One of the former dancers interviewed is currently a member of the leadership team and the parent of a young dancer. Two former dancers were part of the leadership team in the past. Each parent interviewed was the parent of a former dancer that was interviewed. Two of the parents were past members of the leadership team, one of whom was a former dancer many years ago. Also, though not part of the leadership team, two parents had led fundraisers for the folklórico in the past. Six out of the seven leaders in the group are parents of a current dancer. These interconnections make evident the commitment that participants of folklórico have to the relationships built while in folklórico and with folklórico programs.

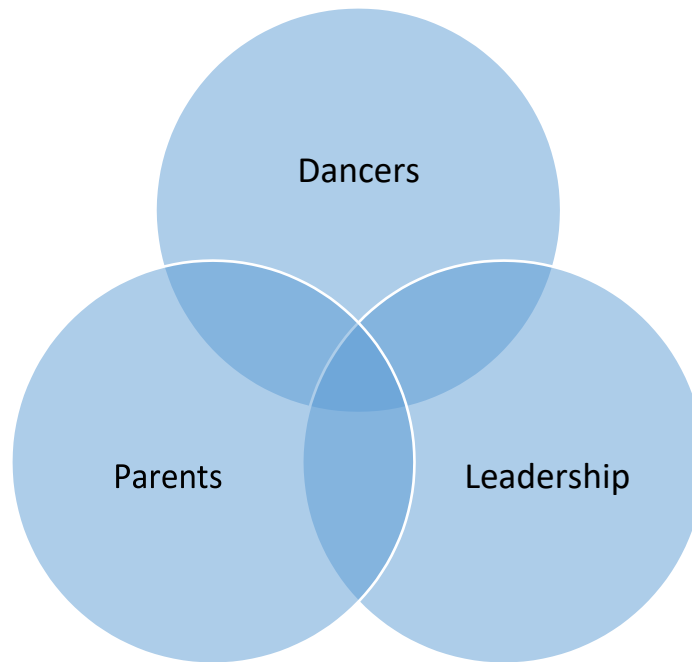


Figure 1. Interconnections of Participants.

Results

I address the research questions that guided this study in this section. Themes emerged through coding drawing from the data collected from individual interviews, a focus group, and leadership journals. The capitals of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005; Rendón et al., 2014) were evident throughout the resulting data. To honor the lived experiences of the participants, I first share their folklórico journeys.

Folklórico Journeys

The journey for most of the former dancers began when they were very young. Four, five and six years old were the ages that all of the participants first

became involved in folklórico. In addition, all of the former dancers participated in folklórico for at least ten years. Their journeys were similar in some cases, and different in others, as were their experiences related to higher education. Below I describe the folklórico journeys of each of the participants.

Hannah. At the time of the interview, Hannah was 34 years old and identified as Mexican American. She started dancing when she was six years old. Her mother was dating the Director's son at the time, and she took Hannah to see a performance. Hannah fell in love with the dresses, and her mother decided that she would join the folklórico group. Eventually, her brother also joined. Hannah stayed in the folklórico until she was 16 or 17 years old.

Hannah did not pursue higher education, and currently works for the county in the finance area and stated that she could not progress in her place of employment because of her lack of a degree. She has worked for many years now and believes that the only type of financial aid she can qualify for would be loans. Hannah is a single mother with two children and is unable to take on additional debt at this time. She became emotional and teared up when the interview concluded and stated, "Those were some of the best years. We had a lot of fun and were a big family, and I'm very grateful for being part of it" (Hannah, personal communication, 2018).

Karina. During the interview, Karina was 30 years old and identified as Latina. She became a member of the folklórico program when she was five years old. From what Karina remembers, she believed she saw the group

perform somewhere, and told her mother that she wanted to join. She felt that her parents thought it would be good for her to learn about her heritage. Karina was a member of folklórico until she was 13 years old. She quit for a short time, and then returned when she was a sophomore or junior in high school.

Karina attended college immediately after high school and received a bachelor's degree three years later. After graduating from college, she had an internship with a magazine for a time, lived abroad for a time, and most recently worked at a community college advising transfer students. When we spoke, she was about to start a new job with the federal government working with people who were seeking asylum. Karina appeared to enjoy the conversation. She had an extremely positive experience with the folklórico.

Jasmine. Jasmine was 22 years old and identified as Mexican American. She started folklórico when she was six years old, and joined the folklórico with her older sister Carmen. Her father was encouraged by his aunt to take them to watch a folklórico rehearsal, and after the rehearsal, he told them they were going to start dancing. Jasmine felt that her parents wanted them to be closer to their heritage, and wanted to give them something they could pass down to their children one day. She remained a part of the folklórico until she was 18 years old.

Jasmine is currently attending a state university in Northern California. She is studying biology and is due to graduate with a bachelor's degree in May of 2019. Jasmine was very nervous at the beginning of the interview, but as we

progressed, she became more comfortable. As we ended the interview, Jasmine stated,

You know, it was a great experience, and I'm really happy that I was able to be a part of it, and I mean, I wish I could communicate better with my group, but I just know that what they're doing is good, and what I'm doing with my life is good. And we're all like at a good point in our life. I think because dance brought us together and made us just like, like the experience of dance and the time during dance was just, I think a good part of my life. (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

Laura. Laura identified as Latina and was 21 years old at the time of the interview. She started dancing folklórico when she was six years old. Laura remembered her mother taking her to a rehearsal, and asking her to watch, and decide if it was something she wanted to do. By the end of the rehearsal, Laura decided that she wanted to join the group, and started within a few days. Her brother joined eventually. Laura felt that her mother enrolled her in the program because of her interest in the Mexican culture. Laura stated,

I think it's because my family's always been very into the Mexican culture...like anything. Even my grandma, like my grandma's Filipino, I don't think she's even Mexican, she's Filipino, but she's always been fascinated with the Mexican culture and that just kind of passed down. My mom loved it, and I'm sure she wanted to show me. Now I love it. (Laura, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Laura remained in the program for ten or eleven years.

Laura is currently attending community college and works part-time in a restaurant. She enjoyed recalling memories of her time in the folklórico and appeared animated through the interview. There was a lot of laughter throughout the interview.

Nancy. Nancy identified as Mexican and was 26 years old. She started dancing folklórico when she was five years old. When her family moved to the local area, her mother enrolled Nancy and her sister in the folklórico program because she wanted them to continue dancing. She remained in the folklórico until she was 21 years old.

Nancy works in a home health office in another city. Nancy attended several community colleges right after high school but did not complete a degree. At the time of the interview, she planned to enroll in a baking and pastry program that holds classes in the evenings. Nancy was very excited about interviewing but also very nervous. She had trouble articulating her responses due to her nervousness. However, at the end of the interview Nancy stated, “It was, it was really fun, and it was more like a family thing, and it kind of, I guess helped me be the person I was or am since I was in it for so long.” (Nancy, personal communication, October 6, 2018).

Isabel. When I interviewed Isabel, was 30 years old and identified as Mexican American. Like the other dancers who participated in this study, she began folklórico when she was five years old. As a child, Isabel remembers

watching her mother practice and perform with the folklórico. She said that her mother felt it was important for her to learn about her culture and heritage. Her mother also enrolled her sister in the program. Once Isabel began dancing, she fell in love with it and continued to dance for over 20 years, though she did take a break at one point.

Isabel attended two different community colleges right after high school; however, she indicated that she took a year off after attending for four years. After that year off, she attended a local private university and eventually obtained a bachelor's degree and a teaching credential. It took eight years from the time she graduated high school to complete her college journey. She is currently a teacher for a local school district. Isabel was reserved as we started the interview; however, by the end of the conversation, she was laughing about the good times she had while she was in folklórico. She stated,

I just loved it. It was a great time and totally worth being in a group. I never joined Girl Scouts because I was terrified. Didn't do brownies because I was terrified. But with dancing, I just have always been comfortable. (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

Olivia (personal communication, October 20, 2018). Olivia was 39 years old and identified primarily as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Olivia became a folklórico dancer at the age of five, and she remained in the folklórico until she was 21 or 22 years old. Olivia remembered seeing her best friend dancing at a performance, and she told her mother she wanted to do it. Olivia had previously

done tap dancing, and ballet, and her mother thought it would be a good activity for her and her sister.

Olivia attended several community colleges and two different private universities after high school. She indicated that she was in and out of college for a time. She mentioned her transition to college was okay, though she was not social with other students; she just really wanted to go to school. Olivia initially pursued early childhood education, and eventually changed to social work. Olivia worked for the county in social services for a time, but at the time of the interview, she was about to start working as an assistant classroom educator at a charter school. Olivia did not complete her college journey. Olivia was expressive with her perspective as we discussed her experiences, and she laughed quite a bit at the memories that came up throughout the interview. When I asked her if she wanted to add anything else to the discussion, she stated, “Just thank you. A personal thing, but thank you.” (Olivia, personal communication, October 20, 2018).

Gina. Gina identified as Chicana, and she was 32 years old. Gina became involved in the folklórico as a dancer when she was four years old. She performed for 16 years off and on and currently teaches for the group. At the time of the interview, her 10-year-old daughter was a member of the folklórico. Gina said that her mother enrolled her in the folklórico because she was a hyperactive child and needed to burn off energy. Gina said that her mother grew up watching the folklórico perform. Her mother always wanted to dance, but was

not able to, and because she had a friend who was an instructor she looked into the group for Gina. Gina's brother also eventually joined the group.

Gina attended a community college right after high school. She indicated that her transition to college was smooth because she had been homeschooled for most of her high school years. She never went to a counselor, and in her second year, she had a class in human services. The professor sparked her interest in the subject. Though she started community college in 2004, she took a long break and completed her bachelor's degree in 2017. At the time of the interview, she was employed part-time as a counselor at a substance abuse clinic. At the end of the interview, she stated:

You know what, its' really weird, like I really, I've never really sat there and thought about how big of an impact it's been on me. It's always been like second nature; it's in my blood. I hear the music, I know I'm not as good, I'll never be as good as Anita as far as seeing choreography and stuff in my head, and more of like she tells me what to do, and I can do it, but it's become such a second nature that I can't really like separate myself from it. You know what I mean. It's totally part of me like that's what it is.

People still trip out that oh yeah, I've been doing this since I was a kid, and they're like, and so other people are like in awe about it because it's not very common, really, you know, but for me it's. It makes me actually probably the majority of who I am. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

The lived experiences of the dancers are essential to understanding the positive influences that folklórico can have on young Latinas. Several of the dancers believe that folklórico made them who they are. As the research questions are addressed, the positive benefits of folklórico will become evident. Along with the themes that emerged to address the research questions, the various capitals of community cultural wealth become apparent as well as how the former dancers apply these capitals seamlessly to education, career, and life in general.

Addressing the Research Questions

Folklórico represented part of the identities of the Latinas who participated in this study. They indicated that folklórico was a part of who they are as individuals. The remaining research questions are addressed in this section.

Aspirations of Latinas Who Participated in Folklórico. The post-secondary and career aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program during middle school and high school varied. Although some of the dancers did not mention specifically post-secondary aspirations, their career aspirations implied the necessity of post-secondary education.

Several of the dancers indicated that when they were younger, they wanted to become professional folklórico dancers or have a career related to dance. Three dancers stated that they wanted to attend a four-year college. One dancer indicated she wanted to attend a community college. All but one dancer identified career aspirations that would require a college education. Career fields mentioned were teaching, medicine, veterinary medicine, sports

medicine, the STEM field, and the medical field. Regarding aspirations for life in general, the dancers' responses varied from doing well in school to being happy and successful. There was also the desire to obtain a job that they enjoyed.

When parents discussed their dancers' aspirations, some parents could not remember discussing college or career aspirations with their daughters at all, while other parents indicated their disappointment when it came to their daughters' inability to complete college. Some parents were on the same page as their daughters when recalling their daughters' middle school or high school aspirations, while some were at odds. For instance, Laura aspired to a career in an emergency room, while her mother Sandra indicated she wanted to be a cosmetologist. There were also parents who could not separate their aspirations for the daughters, from the daughters' aspirations. Olivia's mother, Patricia stated, "I always wanted her to go to college and do something. I'm disappointed that she didn't finish college." (Patricia, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

Most of the dancers indicated that their parents or extended family influenced their aspirations with consistent messaging. For instance, Karina received a bachelor's degree within three years. All of her mother's family had graduated with a college degree, she was involved in AP classes, and she had the consistent messaging from her family. Karina explained:

I knew I always wanted to go to college. In my mom's family, they all went to college. My dad didn't go to college, so he always regrets not going, so

he always pushed me and my brother. He was always kind of, you need to go, and I didn't get that chance, so I want you to go. So it was always in my head that, that I would go to college. (Karina, personal communication, September 29, 2018).

Although Karina's father did not attend college, Karina's family on her mother's side had all attended college. There was an expectation that she would attend college, and she received consistent messaging from the time she was a child, from not only her parents but also her extended family. Her mother had the knowledge and information necessary to ensure that Karina attended college. Also, Karina was in AP classes, which focused on attaining post-secondary education.

Her mother Tina reinforced Karina's statement. Tina stated,

She was always focused on going to college. She realized she wasn't very good at math, so that was out. In fact, one of the reasons she chose the university she did was because they don't require math. You have to take a language, or you can take a language instead of math, and then there's some other requirements. (Tina, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

As young Latinas, encouragement knowledge and consistent messaging were essential for the participants to achieve their aspirations. Karina's mother Tina had the knowledge needed to ensure that Karina was successful in college despite her difficulty with math. Difficulty with math would be a significant barrier

for a family who has no knowledge of higher education or how to navigate the system.

Another example of a participant who received support from home and school was Jasmine. Jasmine aimed to complete a bachelor's degree in four years and was involved in AVID throughout middle school and high school. Through AVID she received essential knowledge and constant messaging about attending college Jasmine explained:

Yeah, from middle school to high school I was part of a program (AVID) that was very driven to lead kids towards college or university. Once we, like once sophomore and senior year hit, that's when we got more serious about applying for graduation and how to apply for financial aid and what to expect when you went to college. (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

While all participants noted that they would have benefited from more information, only Karina and Jasmine reported receiving encouragement knowledge and consistent messaging from representatives of middle schools or high schools attended.

Unfortunately, not all Latinas were encouraged or supported to pursue post-secondary aspirations. For instance, Laura always wanted to go to college, started community college four years ago, and is still attending. She was in the AVID program for one year. Isabel completed a bachelor's degree and teaching credential within eight years. Gina completed a bachelor's degree in 14 years.

Though they both recalled receiving encouragement to pursue higher education while in middle school or high school, they did not receive any assistance or information on how to get to college from school representatives. Gina explained:

I'm sure they did, I mean they weren't like you know. I had Mrs. Muñoz. Actually, Mrs. Muñoz, she got me when I was in middle school, and she would always tell me, she was a big encouragement in my life, and I don't even really know where she is now. But, I don't really remember anybody saying this is how you get to a four-year college, take all these classes, you know? (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018)

In addition, Isabel recalled lacking focus when she enrolled in community college:

Yes, they always told us we should go to college, but never really told us how to get there. No, I was not told how to get there, so I just kind of made a way on my own by, I'm going to start at JC (junior college) and figure it out and then go from there. (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

Isabel stated that she continued to take classes for several years because that is what she thought she was supposed to do. She indicated that if she had received some guidance, she would have completed college sooner and not taken unnecessary courses. Both Nancy and Olivia started college but did not complete. They both indicated that they did not receive any encouragement from

representatives of middle school or high school. When I asked each of them if anyone from middle school or high school encouraged them to go to college, they abruptly stated, “No.” However, Nancy stated, “I think my parents and uncles did that more.” (Nancy, personal communication, October 6, 2018).

Although neither Nancy nor Olivia received encouragement or information from middle school or high school to attend college, they both attended college for a time. Nancy attended several community colleges, and Olivia attended several community colleges and private four-year institutions, but neither completed a degree.

Hannah remembered teachers encouraging her to go to college in middle school and high school and recalled visiting the local public university at that time. However, the encouragement appeared to be minimal. Hannah stated, “Yes, in junior high all of our teachers, and in high school, of course, you know would say ‘At least go to community college, start somewhere, figure out what you want to do.’” (Hannah, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

Upon examining the career and post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program, the importance of encouragement, messaging, and knowledge to achieve post-secondary aspirations became apparent, particularly when participants shared what it meant not to have access to guidance at school.

Karina had a family history of college attendance, and her parents were well aware of what was necessary for her to enter college, and how to guide her.

Also, Tina mentioned that Karina's grandmother had set up a trust fund to finance Karina's college education. Karina explained:

I was lucky enough that my parents were able to figure out and do most of it, like the FAFSA, and all the financial aid paperwork, applying to all the colleges, and so I think if you didn't have that help, having that information available...for the past six months, I was working at a community college in the transfer center, helping people transfer to four year institutions, but I know that even there, that's one of the things I get, that people are just confused about the application processes and deadlines. (Karina, personal communication, September 29, 2018)..

Karina was well aware of the difficulties for someone who does not know these processes. Working in the transfer center of a community college further opened her eyes to the plight of students who do not have assistance when it comes to navigating higher education systems and processes.

Jasmine's experience participating in the AVID program exemplified that access to information, guidance, and consistent messaging resulted in a "college-going" mindset. Jasmine stated,

Definitely the program I was in, in high school drove me to go to college, but junior year was the year that everyone was definitely talking about going to college, or going to University, or going out of state, so that definitely influenced me to also be a part of that movement of kids going to

college right after high school. (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

Jasmine had been receiving consistent messaging since middle school when she first became involved in AVID. In addition to the constant messaging, and access to information and guidance she received through the program, the excitement of being surrounded by others who shared the same “college-going” mindset and goal of attending college further influenced her aspirations and contributed to her success in pursuing higher education.

Jasmine’s father, Victor, also attributed Jasmine’s desire to attend college to the influence of the AVID program. He recalled:

Well the AVID program for my youngest daughter, it would be the AVID program. They did visit colleges and stuff like that a couple of times a year, and over a couple of years, she visited different campuses. And the older one, because she was not in AVID, she did not get those opportunities. The oldest one wanted to go to college and do well. She would always ramble different things; it was not very focused. The youngest one didn’t really know either; she just knew she wanted to go to college. (Victor, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

Victor was able to compare the difference between Jasmine who had access to AVID with the experiences of his older daughter who did not have the option to go to college because she was not involved in the AVID program. The parent perspective highlights that they understand the kids needed institutional

resources to access college. Both Jasmine and Karina's experiences also confirmed the importance of knowledge, guidance and consistent messaging.

Conversely, Hannah's negative experience was a result of lacking the necessary information. She stated,

No one explained how to get to college when it came to finances. I knew we couldn't afford college, and so I didn't try. I didn't know about financial aid, and that I could have probably qualified for it. I could not afford to go, and now I'm in a job where I can't move up because I don't have a degree. I worked for a long time, and now I don't qualify for financial aid. I'm a single mom with two kids, and I can't afford to take out loans now, so I'm stuck. (Hannah, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

Hannah is a single mother and the sole supporter of herself and her two children. "Feeling stuck" means more than being unable to progress at her current place of employment. Although she is intelligent and capable, she is unable to pursue a career that she would prefer. Her current job provides medical insurance for herself and her young children and has a full-time job. She is not ready to give up time with her children, and unable to give up her full-time job to further her education at this time.

Hannah's experience illustrates how without access to a family history of college attendance or academic programs that focused on college attainment; she felt defeated before she could begin to strive for higher education, simply

due to a lack of information. Middle schools and high schools appeared to be unable or unwilling to provide these tools to the majority of participants.

Despite the lack of encouragement, messaging and knowledge, some Latinas still endeavored to achieve their aspirations. However, these young women struggled through their higher education journeys and either abandoned their post-secondary education or needlessly prolonged their journeys. For instance, Nancy started in the community college system. She attended two different community colleges and eventually quit. At the time of the interview, she was about to enroll in a vocational school to focus on culinary arts. She explained: “I haven’t finished school. I stopped going, but I’m actually going to enroll in a baking and pastry program.” (Nancy, personal communication, October 6, 2018).

Nancy’s aspirations changed as she experienced the community college system. Though she is no longer a community college student, she has not given up on post-secondary education. Nancy will attend a vocational college in the evenings while still working full time during the day. Nancy is determined to earn a degree in a subject that she enjoys. Her persistence and determination are evidenced by her decision to take on a rigorous schedule to meet her goals.

Isabel persevered to achieve her post-secondary aspirations. However, her journey was prolonged due to lack of direction and focus. It took her eight years to realize her post-secondary aspirations. She explained:

I ended up in JC (junior college) because I was just taking classes and taking classes because that was the thing that I was supposed to do, but there was really no direction until the last two years that I was there, and then I knew what I needed to do. (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

Through the dancers' experiences, another barrier to their post-secondary aspirations became evident. As young Latinas, they did not have access to role models who could guide them with the sufficient knowledge required to access and navigate higher education. Consequently, representatives from middle school or high school had little to no influence on the post-secondary aspirations of these young Latinas during that period. Nevertheless, the former dancers indicated that in addition to the influence of their immediate families and extended families to pursue higher education, members of the folklórico were a considerable influence on the college and career aspirations of young Latinas.

Influence of Folklórico on College and Career Aspirations. Through the data collected in this study, it became evident that this community-based folklórico program provided exposure to people, places, and experiences that influenced their college, career and life aspirations creating expectations for themselves. In addition, these experiences resulted in an accumulation of the capitals of community cultural wealth. Upon examination of the data, the following themes emerged:

- Exposure and adaptability to people, spaces and experiences.

- Exposure and access to role models.
- Environment of hard work and expectations.

Exposure and Adaptability to People, Spaces and Experiences.

Community-based folklórico programs provided exposure to new people, spaces, and experiences for Latinas that influenced their ability to be comfortable and adaptable to different people, places and situations. Performing at various venues such as schools, county fairs, state fairs, country clubs, and convalescent facilities allowed participants to meet different people at these locations. These experiences broadened their horizons and contributed to the ability of participants to operate in different environments.

For instance, for some dancers and their parents, folklórico provided them the experience of flying on a plane for the very first time.

Olivia was most excited about her trips to Florida to perform at Disneyworld. Her mother was unable to go because of the cost. She shared:

The biggest one was Disneyworld, going to Disneyworld twice. I still look at all the pictures. I just took my mom to Disneyworld. That was two years ago because I always promised I would take her there since we danced there. (Olivia, personal communication, October 20, 2018).

Patricia did not want Olivia to miss the experience and sent her with the folklórico. The trip to Disneyworld exposed Olivia to new experiences that were impactful at that time in her life. So impactful that she promised to take her

mother to Disneyworld when she was able. She had a desire to share the experience with her mother, which she was eventually able to do.

Olivia's mother Patricia discussed that sending Olivia to Disneyworld with the folklórico changed Olivia when she returned. She explained:

When she went to Disneyworld, she left here as a little girl, but she came back as a young woman, you know because she was more confident. She was very independent after that, and she was without mom for that length of time, and I was like, oh, my baby grew up, and just like in that week she was gone, it really helped her. It brought that confidence to her. Sometimes she's a little too much, but I mean, I'm glad she's confident. And she's very confident when it comes to doing her job or just anything. (Patricia, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

Olivia developed independence and confidence in that first trip to Disneyworld that endured for the rest of her life. Although Olivia was surrounded by people who cared about her during the trip to Disneyworld, she had to depend on herself, and learn how to operate without the support of her mother. There was the plane flight, the hotel accommodations, performance preparation, and the schedule that Olivia navigated on her own. Because she was able to do this, she believed that she could do anything on her own, which resulted in confidence in herself.

For other dancers, the first time they traveled out of the state was when they attended a large mariachi and folklórico conference. Attending the

conference exposed the dancers to over 300 hundred folklórico dancers and mariachi students from across the United States and Mexico who shared their passion. Jasmine recalled the importance of this event:

I think one of the most thrilling performances I've ever done was when we went to the mariachi conference for the first time. I performed three times at the mariachi conference, and that was definitely an experience to have, I think just to have a larger audience than I was used to before. Going to the conference and learning from professionals, I think that was definitely a challenge, and there was a language barrier between us. (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

At this conference, the dancers learned and collaborated with other dancers and mariachi students to present a large-scale production to an arena-sized audience. Engaging with folklórico instructors, dancers, and mariachis who were from different states or Mexico, sometimes speaking a different language, in a very formal setting was different from their informal and comfortable folklórico environment at home.

Experiences such as Disneyworld and the conference provided these young women with the ability to be successful when moving from space to space or from one situation to another. It also provided the opportunity to develop independence and confidence.

The capacity to move from the familiar to the unfamiliar and operate successfully in both environments speaks to pluriversal capital. The confidence

and independence gained from these experiences, combined with the pluriversal capital acquired influenced the ability of dancers to be comfortable and adaptable to different people, environments, and locations, and apply this to their lives.

Both the dancers and parents emphasized that these opportunities would not have been available to them if they had not participated in this folklórico program.

Exposure and Access to Role Models. Community-based folklórico programs provided exposure and access to role models, especially strong Latina role models who influenced the career and education aspirations of the dancers. Dancers described instructors, leaders and older dancers as positive role models that they aspired to emulate. Their parents and members of the leadership team confirmed the availability of positive role models that exist in folklórico programs, and how the dancers wanted to be like them and learned from them.

The dancers explained that folklórico programs influenced them as Latinas and contributed to the accumulation of various forms of capital. For instance, Hannah described why she viewed members of the folklórico as role models:

Well, Vivian because she was always positive and always fought through everything, and continued to push and still continues to push through whatever situation she's in. Anita because she was always very supportive and still is, and she continues her education and would always tell us, you know to reach further basically, you guys have to reach further. And Angela, she just stuck through it all, her medical condition and pain,

and everything and she was making beautiful dresses then, and still continues to do so today. (Hannah, 2018)

Hannah's statement revealed not only that folklórico programs influenced her as a Latina, but also that she acquired various forms of capital. Latinas who see role models always fighting through difficult situations and never giving up accumulate perseverance capital.

Also, exposure to role models who have attained higher education, and constant messaging to reach further, provided the Latina participants with aspirational capital.

Several former dancers viewed members of the folklórico group as role models because they were attending college, went away to college, or had attained a degree. Laura (2018) explained why she saw Carla, a former dancer, as a role model: "I wanted to be like Carla. I wanted to go to a state college up north, and I wanted to, I don't know. I just wanted to be like her." (Laura, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Laura's experience is similar to other dancers in that they saw members of the folklórico group attending or completing college, and wanted to be like them.

This type of modeling influenced their higher education aspirations and developed aspirational capital. For instance, other dancers saw Latina members of the folklórico as role models because they worked hard to have their careers, families and to attain higher education. Gina explained why she considered Anita as a role model:

Anita has been a part of my life, my whole entire life, and just by her going to school, and furthering her career, she never really quit anything. She has always been consistent with everything. I mean absolutely everything she's been involved with, and I think, that to me is an impact. Not only was she a role model to me, but I know she was a role model to my mother as well, and since they were so close, I mean, it's only, it rubs off; you know what I mean? It's like I see these powerful women in my life being able to accomplish things, and, and it's impacting. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina's experience in folklórico confirmed the existence of positive role models within folklórico programs and demonstrated not only how this community-based folklórico program influenced her life, but also how the strong Latina role models associated with folklórico have an impact on young Latinas. Through Anita, Gina interacted with a consistent role model throughout her entire life who also had an impact on her mother, Vivian. Gina's experience demonstrates how role models within folklórico programs influence the aspirations of Latinas and pass on familial, perseverance and aspirational capital.

An Environment of Hard Work and Expectations. Another way that the folklórico program influenced the aspirations of young Latinas was through the example of hard work, and the expectations of the instructors. The folklórico program provided the dancers with an understanding of the hard work it

would take to complete an objective. Jasmine indicated that she saw Robert as a role model:

When it came to dance, I think, I think my cousin Robert was a huge role model because he was just so good at it and it was what I strove to be like, to be as good as him. Robert, I think was just like how disciplined he was with his steps, and just how he wasn't afraid to just stop and start over or like, he could, you could ask him anything. You could go up to him and be like, I don't understand what this step is, could you show me how to do it? (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

Robert showed Jasmine that even someone she admired and wanted to emulate could make mistakes and that a mistake should not prevent you from trying again. His example not only showed her that making a mistake did not mean you could not accomplish a goal, but also that members of the folklórico were willing to assist the dancers in the struggles they experienced in achieving their goals.

Similarly, her father Victor indicated that role models within the folklórico program influenced both of his daughters. He explained:

I mean all of the instructors, whether in the group, or at conferences, they all had, were good role models, and good influences on my daughters.

Just as an instructor not letting dancers perform until they knew the steps or that expectation that you don't want to put somebody out there when they're not ready, and just learning that expectation that they have to work

at something to achieve a goal. (Victor, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

Victor's view of his daughters' experiences as folklórico dancers indicated that good role models exist within community-based folklórico programs. Also, he felt that the high expectations that instructors had for the dancers taught his daughters the importance of working hard to achieve a goal.

These experiences demonstrate how folklórico role models are examples to young Latinas in how to persist in achieving their goals. Jasmine's experiences through her own eyes, as well as her fathers, illustrate how folklórico programs contribute to the accumulation of perseverance and aspirational capital.

There were other instances where dancers, parents, and leaders of the folklórico explained the influence of folklórico programs on the aspirations of Latinas. Karina's mother Tina indicated that older dancers were role models to her daughter due to their kindness, confidence and the assistance they provided to younger dancers. Karina noted that because she learned about the traditions and cultures from the different regions in Mexico through folklórico, it influenced her interest in learning about new cultures, and her decision to live abroad for an extended period. Gina's mother Vivian felt that one of the instructors was a good influence on her daughter as a parent, and modeled how to be a better parent just by Gina's exposure to her.

Positive role models are common in community-based folklórico programs, and participation in folklórico programs provides access to strong role models that are essential for developing young people. The availability of strong Latina role models during middle school and high school years made an impact on Latinas in this study and was essential to developing these young women to become strong Latinas. Continued and consistent exposure to folklórico role models resulted in the accumulation of various forms of capital such as aspirational, familial and perseverance capital.

As the former dancers and their parents indicated, participating in this folklórico program influenced their college and career aspirations. Folklórico programs were also spaces for developing skills that are transferable to educational, career goals and life in general. Through the development of these transferable skills, Latinas also acquire various capitals.

Development of Transferable Skills. In addition to folklórico programs influencing the college and career aspirations of folklórico dancers, the lived experiences of each of the former dancers who participated in this folklórico program included the development of skills and qualities that helped them not only progress through the program but also were transferable to their educational and career goals and life in general. An examination of the former dancers' journeys indicated that different skills developed concurrently. For example, communication skills, collaboration skills, and interpersonal skills. The development of these skills also contributed to the development of qualities such

as confidence and assertiveness. The combination of the skills and qualities developed in the folklórico program define strong Latinas. This process, immersed in community cultural wealth, resulted in the acquisition of various capitals. Perspectives from their parents and leaders of the folklórico program triangulated the findings.

The Folklórico Cycle. Upon examining the experiences of the dancers related to the development of skills, a cycle emerged whereby experiences developed skills that further developed qualities and acquire various forms of capital. These skills, qualities, and capitals afforded dancers the ability to operationalize these skills, qualities, and capitals in their everyday lives and apply them to education, career, and life in general. Figure 2 illustrates this cycle.

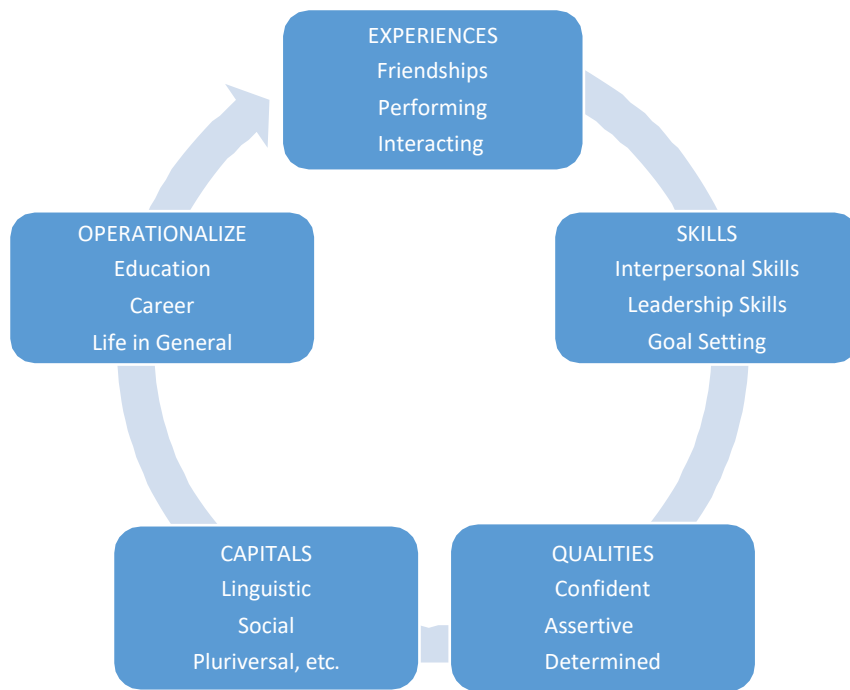


Figure 2. Folklorico Cycle.

Interpersonal Skills, Communication, Collaboration, and Accumulated Capital. Dancers, parents and the leadership of the folklórico noted the development of communication, collaboration (teamwork), and interpersonal skills. While building these skills, qualities emerged such as confidence, and assertiveness. The process of gaining these skills and qualities resulted in former dancers acquiring different forms of capital such as linguistic, social and pluriversal capital. The ability to operationalize the skills, qualities, and capitals in their daily lives illustrates the impact that the folklórico program had on these young Latinas.

Isabel and her mother Claudia explained how interpersonal skills and the ability to collaborate were developed in the folklórico program. Isabel recalled:

It created this sense of teamwork because I had other dancers who didn't necessarily take direction, but we could talk things out, as well as, this would work better, and you can agree or disagree, and in a safe environment because we were comfortable with the people that you were with. I became more confident when I would speak to people and disagree with them. (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018)

In the folklórico program, there were situations where the instructor might not be available for a performance due to a variety of reasons. Older dancers sometimes have to step in to review choreographies due to dancers being unable to make it to performances. Occasionally, dancers react negatively to one of their peers taking the lead in these situations and are sometimes difficult when they do not agree with the changes.

Isabel's mother also shared:

When you're in a dance, you have partners, or you have other people in a particular dance, but my point being, in order to be in dances, it's not just you. There's always a couple, or you might have a partner, or you have other people you're dancing with, and you need to be able to work with those people, and include them in the performance, in the choreography

to really be successful, and have it look good for the entire group.

(Claudia, personal communication, November 3, 2018).

Teamwork and collaboration are an essential part of folklórico programs.

Because of the deep relationships that dancers had with each other, they were able to communicate with each other and discuss their differences in an effective manner. The knowledge that they had a shared goal to create a beautiful performance together resulted in a desire to rise above differences to complete their goal collaboratively.

Moreover, Jasmine explained that she was able to transfer these skills when she went away to college. She stated:

I think being in the folklórico group just really helped me speak out or learn how to speak out among my peers if anything didn't seem right to me. It just really helped me find a way to get close with people and to be on a comfortable level with them. And even like, I wasn't very assertive while growing up, and I learned from the group, from dance, sometimes you just have to try. Try to be assertive and tell people like no, this is wrong, like, no, this doesn't make sense and stuff. (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

Jasmine's experience demonstrated not only the interpersonal skills she developed, but also the qualities she gained in the process. She was confident and assertive in college situations where it was necessary for her to speak up.

Karina felt that folklórico helped her with communication skills because as a young dancer, she felt comfortable asking adults and older dancers for help.

She explained how she transferred these skills to college:

I think talking to adults and asking for that help when you don't know the step, or even just the older girls, you know there's that age gap. Like the idea that if you don't know something, it's okay to ask someone who knows. So the same as if you don't know in college how to do something, to ask the professor. They're more than willing to help. But getting over that fear of asking the adults or someone older, I know people struggle with that sometimes going into college, but I don't know. I felt very comfortable asking them when I didn't know something. I felt very comfortable saying 'I don't know this, can you explain further?', or like 'I didn't quite understand you in class, can you help me?' (Karina, personal communication, September 29, 2018)

The experiences of Isabel, Jasmine, and Karina along with the corroboration of Isabel's mother Claudia, illustrate the cycle referred to in Figure 2. Each of the dancers gained communication, collaboration, and interpersonal skills while participating in the folklórico program. They further developed qualities such as confidence and assertiveness. The development of these skills and qualities by the participants works in tandem with the acquisition of capitals. For examples, through the development of communication, collaboration, and interpersonal

skills, former dancers developed confidence and assertiveness. Further, in this process, they strengthened linguistic, social and pluriversal capital.

Members of the leadership team also mentioned interpersonal and other skills that dancers acquire while participating in folklórico. For example:

I've seen dancers in the group develop several skill such as social interaction skills. They meet and interact with other dances who also love dancing folklórico and make lifelong friends. This, I believe, helps greatly, as some of the dancers start off very shy. And it also helps with the communication skills and allows them to express emotions. (Andrea, personal communication, September 6, 2018).

The necessity of working together to perform, or to ask others for help when there are complicated steps or choreography to overcome assists dancers in developing interpersonal skills, confidence, and assertiveness. Also, linguistic capital was strengthened through communication and collaboration with other dancers while learning a dance or choreography. Constant interactions and collaborations with other dancers and instructors allowed dancers to gain social capital because they developed connections and relationships with other dancers and instructors. Finally, former dancers learned how to use these skills in different situations or environments such as college, career or life in general. The ability to shift their use of interpersonal skills from the folklórico environment to college or career demonstrates the use of pluriversal capital by the participants. The skills, qualities, and capitals developed while participating in

this folklórico program afforded dancers the ability to operationalize these skills, qualities, and capitals in their everyday lives and apply them to education, career, and life in general. Figure 2 illustrates this cycle.

Setting and Achieving Goals. Dancers, parents, and leadership team members indicated the development of self-discipline, accountability, and responsibility are essential skills gained in the folklórico program that contribute to the dancers' ability to set and achieve goals. The combination of these skills led to the development of qualities such as persistence, determination, independence, and confidence. These skills and qualities became building blocks necessary to attain aspirational capital, as well as perseverance capital. The ability to transfer these skills, qualities, and capitals to other aspects of their lives demonstrates that folklórico programs contribute to the development of strong Latinas. Karina described how participating in the folklórico program led to the development of self-discipline, accountability, and responsibility. She explained:

I think that going back to working hard, and that goes back to when like I was younger. Like coming home and knowing I need to practice steps, and I won't learn it if I don't practice it. It also goes to school, if you don't practice the math problems, or the spelling words you're never going to learn it, so I think that helps kind of like that having a good work ethic. (Karina, personal communication, September 29, 2018).

Karina understood that it was her responsibility to learn the required steps to perform. She knew that she would not learn the steps without hard work and practice, and she disciplined herself to practice and learned the steps, making her accountable for her own progress. As a result, she gained important qualities such as persistence, determination, independence, and confidence. In addition, both aspirational and perseverance capital were strengthened through hard work, responsibility, and accountability. Karina learned how to use these skills in the college environment equating the hard work of learning steps to applying that work ethic to school to be successful. In this way, Karina operationalized the skills, qualities, and capitals she gained in the folklórico program to the college environment. Karina's experiences illustrate the cycle referred to in figure 2.

Tina, Karina's mother, agreed and expanded on Karina's comments by noting that accountability and responsibility increased Karina's self-confidence. She recalled:

I think she grew a lot during that period. And like I said, I think that getting up on stage and having to qualify to get up on stage, I think that gave her a lot of self-confidence that she could learn things, and advance if she was interested and if she worked at it. So I think that's a good point because you learn that these are the requirements. If you want to do this, this is what you have to do, and you're not going to get there unless you do it. So there's not this kind of like, you really tried hard so we'll just go ahead and let you do it anyway. So I think that idea, that you have to work for

something, these are the requirements for you to move on, so you have to follow or stick to the rule, so I think that really helps when you get into college. (Tina, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

Tina saw this as a growth period for Karina in terms of her self-confidence.

Karina understood what was required to perform, and she decided to work hard to achieve that goal. Achieving that goal with her hard work, resulted in self-confidence in knowing that if she had a goal, and knew what to do to achieve it, she could accomplish any goal by working hard. Tina felt that this experience helped Karina, and would help other dancers as they entered college.

Gina reiterated the role of the folklórico in Latinas developing the ability to set and achieve goals. She explained:

I was always the youngest one. I always thought I was one of the big kids, so to be able to be in the big group, I had to act like it too, you know like, so yeah. I think being able to see instructors act on a whim sometimes, you know, I, I probably developed it from there because you know my mother. Well, you know, she needs direction, you know so yeah I probably did develop it from there. I never thought about that, you know, but now, you know, I'm like okay that's me. I can problem solve, I can have self-discipline, and I'm definitely motivated and determined. If you want to get into a dance, then you're going to discipline yourself to learn what you need to learn, whether it's the movement or your posture, or it's the step itself you know. Especially being maybe younger in age, but

bigger as far as physical wise, you're able to get into the older group, and if that's your goal, if that's your end goal, yeah you're going to want to be able to prove that you could do that, that you can keep up with the older kids. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

The cycle is evident in Gina's experience as well. For Gina the skills and qualities she gained were a bit different; however, the cycle remained the same. Gina was one of the youngest dancers in her group. She was taller and appeared to be older than she was. However, she aspired to dance in the more advanced dances with the older group. Gina felt that achieving her goal, was a problem that she needed to solve. She solved this problem by disciplining herself to learn what she needed to learn to get into that older group. Similar to Karina's example, this also required responsibility and accountability, though she did not mention these skills specifically. Through this process, she recognized that she had the qualities of determination and motivation. Other qualities that are apparent in Gina's example are persistence and confidence. Gina also gained aspirational and persistence capital in this process. Gina indicated that she currently operationalizes the skills, qualities, and capitals obtained through participation in the folklórico program. Further, she attributed learning these skills, qualities, and capitals to her time in the folklórico.

Members of the leadership also noted that participation in community-based folklórico programs fosters the ability to set a goal and achieve it. Andrea explained how this relates to attaining a college degree, "Every student has

different skills they have acquired dancing in the group. When these skills are nurtured and cultivated, this will help them when it comes to completing a degree.” (Andrea, personal communication, September 6, 2018). Self-discipline was required for dancers to master steps, movements, and choreography. Understanding that they had to learn the steps movements and choreography helped dancers to develop a work ethic by working hard, accountability by understanding that they alone had to master the steps, movements and choreography, and responsibility by recognizing the importance of being prepared for performances. Because there were high expectations in the folklórico program for dancers to learn new steps, movements or choreographies to progress to new dances or more advanced levels, the dancers learned how to set and achieve a goal. Dancers developed determination, independence, and confidence through this process. In addition, dancers acquired aspirational capital and perseverance capital or “*ganas*” in progressing through the different dances and levels in the folklórico program. Finally, former dancers learned how to apply these skills, qualities, and capitals to other aspects of their lives.

The Leadership Development Process. Many of the dancers indicated that the most important skill they developed by participating in the folklórico was leadership. Dancers, parents, and leadership team members indicated that the combination of various skills developed resulted in leadership abilities. Similar to the development of other skills, the development of leadership skills resulted in the emergence of qualities that contributed to their

development as strong Latinas. Dancers also acquired multiple capitals while developing leadership skills. There were several examples of how dancers apply their leadership skills to other aspects of their lives.

Isabel discussed how her leadership skills were developed, and how she continues to apply these skills in her career. She explained:

I became like the leader of the group that I was in, and the other dancers who were in my group would come and ask me for help and ask me questions, and that helped with leadership skills. If something was off, and I had to tweak a dance at a performance because the instructor wasn't there, then I was the one who was like, 'this is what we're doing.' Walk them through it, 'This what we're going to do, go out there and do it.' My leadership skills were honed greatly, and I use them daily for work even now because I have four people who work underneath me and I'm working not only with them but also with the kids. (Isabel, 2019).

As a leader in her age group, it was sometimes necessary for Isabel to problem solve when instructors were not available. She would explain revisions to the dancers and walk them through the changes, confirm what they were going to do, and encourage the dancers to excel. Through this process, Isabel gained not only problem solving, but also leadership skills that she continues to use in the workplace. She also gained important qualities in this process such as assertiveness, confidence, and patience. Linguistic, social, perseverance and pluriversal capital were reinforced in this process. Isabel indicated that she uses

these skills, qualities, and capitals in her current employment, thereby operationalizing each in her everyday life.

Similar to Isabel, Olivia developed leadership skills during folklórico and would apply the skills at work. She explained:

I think all my supervisors always said 'Go to Olivia; she knows exactly what to do. She knows how to figure it out. She knows how to do it.' And me wanting to be that person in the office made me strive more to do more, to work harder. You know, I was the first one in, and the last one to leave, that type of thing. And I think, that the skills, of course, the skills that I learned got me there because I didn't have that in school so much, you know? I wasn't held accountable. Dancing made me be held accountable. You know being a leader is not just being the boss. It's actually you know, you're teaching somebody how to do something, it's so they can know, and they can pass it on. Everything is a chain, you know just like generations, you know when you're cooking or anything like that. How are you going to learn unless somebody teaches them and explains it to them, and then they can pass it to somebody else. (Olivia, personal communication, October 20, 2018).

Olivia gained leadership skills while she participated in the folklórico program. She restated that she learned these skills from folklórico and not from school. Her comments highlighted the fact that dancers received little to no support or guidance from middle school or high school. She felt that folklórico made her

accountable, and that is something that has carried through her life. Olivia was involved in the folklórico for many years, and like Isabel became a leader in her age group. Like Isabel, she gained her leadership skills helping other dancers. Olivia noted that her leadership skills were acknowledged at work and she would often have opportunities to guide other employees. Also, one of the things she learned about leadership was that you pass on your skills and knowledge to others. This feeling of the need to give back is reminiscent ethnic consciousness capital, which expressed itself as dancers felt a responsibility to help or give back to other dancers who came after them.

Gina evolved from a dancer to a parent, to a leadership team member in the folklórico. Similar to Olivia, Gina noted that, to her, leadership is about helping others to be better. She explained:

I think I kind of fell into it; I think it really, whether it's just you know helping the little ones here and there, or you know, people coming up and asking me for help. I kind of, I did kind of fall into it as far as the leadership team goes, but, but it's being able to help others. Being the leader is being able to help them, and trying to make them better as far as a dancer goes, or as far as a person goes because, I mean, we've had dancers in there who have had difficult times whether they're being bullied at school, or you know personal issues too. But again, I feel like I'm approachable for anybody so whether it's a parent of a child or anyone at the dance group.

So to me, my leadership skills were probably built because I was able to help others. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Similar to Olivia, Gina felt that leadership was about helping others. Gina elaborated on the idea that leadership was about passing knowledge on to others and helping others to be better as not only dancers but as people. Gina felt that the ability to help others was the source of developing her leadership skills, and noted that as a leader you are sometimes required to deal with young people who are experiencing difficulties. While Olivia and Gina developed leadership skills, they also developed important qualities of a leader such as empathy, patience, and understanding. Further, they built on their community cultural wealth using linguistic, familial, social, and ethnic consciousness capital. Olivia also indicated how she applied her leadership skills to the workplace.

Similarly, Gina elaborated that she applies these leadership skills in her place of employment, and like Olivia, noted that her leadership skills were apparent to others. She explained:

Like for some reason I take control of things, like even at my place of employment now, when nobody's there, like everybody comes to me like because I take control of things, and it's like, I problem solve, I can problem solve and it comes as second nature to me. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina's ability to problem solve was gained first by being a dancer, then by being a leader in her age group and younger age groups, and eventually becoming a

leader in the folklórico program. The ability to problem solve quickly is gained by dealing with multiple personalities, and age groups while dealing with the pressure of creating a performance in various environments often with unplanned situations. These situations happened often enough that taking control and coping with unforeseen situations became second nature to Gina.

Isabel's mother Claudia also explained that Isabel uses her leadership skills in her place of employment. She noted:

She is a teacher, and she has four people working for her, and she has to be able to coordinate them. She mentioned having her annual review and the principal really complimenting her on that, on how she's been to other classes, the principal has observed other classes, and their employees are just kind of doing this (held her phone up), and texting, and were not even interacting with the kids. Whereas her (Isabel), she's got it set up in such a way that they're constantly interacting with the kids, and helping and such so she complimented her on that too, so that would be leadership. She was not only a dancer, but an instructor, and she had to know how to coordinate kids, had to know when their limits were hit, and you have to have that kind of knowledge when you're working with your employees. What can I push them to do, and what is the most I can get out of them, but I think she learned that from folklórico. She'd see people, the younger kids trying to move up and then well they might not be holding their hands the right way, or they might not be doing the body movements,

and facial expressions, or whatever. And she would take them aside, and really tell them, that if you really want to move up to that particular group, you're gonna have to do this, and this is what you need to work on, and some have taken it in stride, and it helps them a lot. (Claudia, personal communication, November 3, 2018).

Claudia's explanation highlights that like Gina and Olivia, Isabel's leadership skills were apparent to others and they developed by helping others. As dancers who grew up in the program, Gina, Olivia, and Isabel not only developed the ability to meet the expectations of dancers in the folklórico program but also fostered establishing those same expectations for the younger dancers. This process, in turn, shaped in the younger dancers, the ability to develop their own folklórico aspirations based on the expectations of the program, which further provided younger dancers the ability to set goals and achieve them in any environment. In addition, the dancers in this study indicated that older dancers and instructors inspired and influenced them during their folklórico journeys. Furthermore, the development of leadership skills contributed to a process whereby the dancers became strong Latinas that inspired and influenced new younger dancers who enrolled in the program.

Members of the leadership team also noted dancers develop leadership skills while participating in folklórico programs. For example, Edward explained:

We see our dancers gain confidence to lead as they become older and start to mentor younger dancers in the art of folklórico. Our dancers, the

females, in particular, seem to gain a greater sense of pride in their culture as they learn new and more complex dances from different regions of Mexico. (Edward, personal communication, September 6, 2018).

The folklórico program has a tradition and expectation that older dancers will help younger dancers as they gain experience and knowledge. This practice results in dancers becoming informal leaders in each of the age groups that exist in the program. Eventually, some of the former dancers evolved into instructors or leadership team members. The former dancers built their leadership skills as they progressed through the folklórico program. Through this process, dancers developed empathy, patience, commitment, assertiveness, determination, independence, and motivation. While developing leadership skills and the qualities associated with leadership skills, the dancers acquired linguistic, social, perseverance, pluriversal, and ethnic consciousness capital. As with the other skills, qualities, and capitals acquired during participation in the folklórico programs, dancers were able to transfer and apply them to different environments, situations, and everyday life. This leadership development process is continuous in this folklórico program and is depicted below in Figure 3.

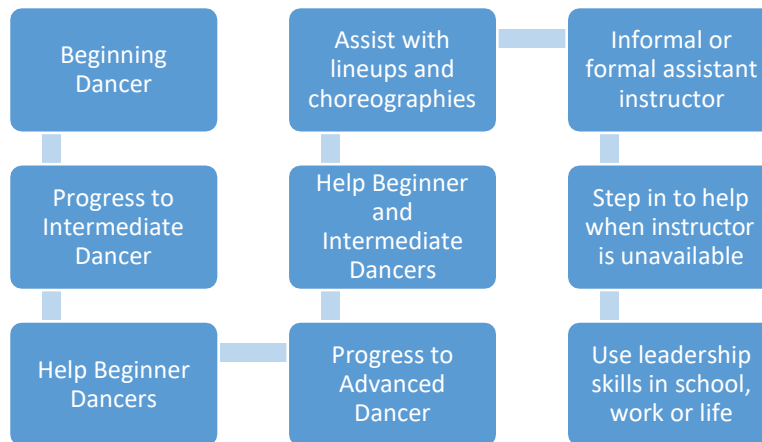


Figure 3. Leadership Development Process.

When beginning dancers come into the program, they learn steps, choreographies, and dances at a beginning level. When they progress to intermediate dancers, they are experts at the beginning dances, and are able to help new beginning dancers. As intermediate dancers progress to advanced dancers, they increase their expertise as it includes both the beginning and intermediate repertoire. They are now able to help both beginning dancers and intermediate dancers. The advanced dancers begin to assist with line ups and choreographies because, at this point, they have gained that additional knowledge. They eventually evolve into formal or informal instructors who are directed by the lead instructor to focus on helping specific groups or dancers who are in the process of learning. When lead instructors are unavailable, these dancers are able to step into the leadership roles at performances or rehearsals due to the wealth of folklórico knowledge they have. Eventually, these dancers

are able to transfer these leadership skills other areas such as school, career or life in general. For any dancer, the leadership process begins at the intermediate level. When intermediate dancers see beginner dancers struggling with a step or dance, they assist them in learning the steps or dance. When advanced dancers see intermediate or beginner dancers struggling, they help them with their struggles. Eventually, the more advanced dancers become informal assistant instructors, may progress to being instructors or leadership team members. At the same time, they reinforce the expectations of the folklórico program on the younger dancers and are becoming role models to the younger dancers.

In addition to the skills and qualities developed by Latinas who participated in the folklórico program, they also derived other positive benefits. For example, when dancers spoke about folklórico, they frequently mentioned how comfortable they were within the folklórico program. Dancers described the folklórico and the people associated with it such as instructors, directors, parents and older dancers as being supportive and kind. Also, the former dancers described instructors and older dancers as approachable in terms of asking questions or clarifying their understanding of steps or choreographies. This environment resulted in dancers becoming comfortable with questioning situations. Dancers described folklórico as a place where they developed confidence, could be themselves, and felt free and unencumbered from difficulties or negativity, especially when it came to difficult middle school or high school experiences. In addition, folklórico was a place where they began to

realize their self-worth and the importance of their feelings about themselves and pride in their abilities. The perspectives of both parents and members of the leadership team triangulated the experiences of the dancers.

Development and Enhancement of Confidence, Self-esteem, and Pride. Several dancers and their parents described middle school and high school experiences as difficult. Some dancers experienced not fitting in, bullying and being rebellious. For instance, Isabel remembered middle school and high school as a being difficult because she is of mixed race but identifies as Mexican American. She recalled:

It was, I don't know, it was an interesting time because that's when...middle school and high school is kind of where I split. I went to an elementary school that, where I was grouped with all of the other Mexican kids, and then when I got to middle school, I was split up from them so everybody that I had grown up with. I had to make brand new friends, and I had to start from scratch, and I had to do the same thing in high school. And it seems that at every stage the more, the older I got, the more I was seen as not Mexican, but then I didn't fit in with the white kids either. So it was just like that weird kind of balance between the two...and by the time I got to high school, I was just so fed up with it that, it just wasn't fun. I was ready to go. (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

Isabel's experience of not fitting in during her middle school and high school years, made her feel as if she did not belong. In addition, Isabel's experience

made her feel as though others were pushing her out of school, resulting in her desire to leave school.

Laura also mentioned that middle school was not fun for her because people wanted to fight her. She did not care to elaborate. However, her mother Sandra did elaborate. She explained, “She (Laura) was bullied terribly from grade school, kind of into high school for the way she looked, the way she talked, just how goofy she was.” (Sandra, personal communication, October 13, 2018). Like Isabel, Laura was not happy in school and felt as though she did not belong. Other students bullied her for being herself to the point of wanting to fight her. For Laura, folklórico was something that she looked forward to during these difficult years.

Gina and her mother both agreed that Gina was rebellious in middle school and high school. Gina recalled,

I tested the waters. I tested the waters like, I really did. I was more of a leader you know, but I also did my own thing. Like my, for me being the one that, like partied and did all the rebellious stuff. I have a strict mother, *strict* mother, and to just think back, ‘How the hell did I get away with half of that? How did I get away with that?’ But when she found out, oh, it was, the party was over. Seriously, so I tested the waters but I was always you know, and I tell my daughter now like, there’s no reason for you not to have good grades. I was a straight-A student. I went to school all the time. I rarely every ditched. I, you know, yeah I did stupid stuff, but

I made sure that school came first. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

People tended to follow Gina; however, she made decisions for herself. She was intelligent and capable as a straight-A student. However, she made bad decisions during her middle school and high school years.

Similarly, her mother Vivian explained,

Oh, she was a trouble maker. She got expelled from every school. From middle school, so you know, one of them ended up keeping her and keeping her grounded. High school, she, you know, she met up with a couple of friends, and it got ugly. And that was in high school, but its, that's when she quit the folklórico. She wanted, she wanted to play ball. She wanted to play softball for the high school, and she got in, and it just... (Vivian, personal communication, October 17, 2018).

Gina was a straight A student who cared about school and had strong leadership skills that were developed while she was in the folklórico program. Unfortunately, when Gina got into high school, she met up with some old friends who were involved in drugs. Quitting folklórico at that time to play softball resulted in free time she spent with these friends and resulted in bad decisions. Perhaps if Gina had more guidance and a sense of belonging at school, the result might have been different.

When dancers described how performing made them feel, they indicated that performing with the folklórico benefited them in a variety of ways despite the

difficulties they experienced in middle school and high school: they developed self-confidence, self-esteem, and a belief in themselves. In addition, their parents and members of the leadership team agreed with them.

Isabel recalled:

It made me feel special. I was in the middle of the stage, on the stage, and that was like my time to say look at me and what I can do. I felt this way every time I danced, but I loved afterwards when people would come and ask to take pictures with me. (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

Isabel's recollection is important. Previously Isabel indicated that her middle school and high school experiences were negative due to not fitting in. She felt as though there was no place in school where she belonged, and consequently, just wanted school to be over so that she could move on. Performing as part of the folklórico group enhanced her self-esteem by making her feel special due to her abilities. After the performances, the audience reinforced her self-esteem because they wanted to take photographs with her.

Similarly, Gina shared:

Proud. My last performance, you know, especially, because I had the opportunity, my last performance was, I think, I want to say, *Huizache* was the biggest one for me, and I got to like perform with my Robert, you know. I mean I loved performing with him, especially as we got, well now that we're adults now, we kinda had to do it when we were kids. It didn't

even matter if I was a foot taller than him, (laughter), we still had to do it, as far as being partners, but it's so much better when you get older, and, and, I don't know, I've always felt proud. I mean, especially when you're confident in what you're doing, and you have a confident partner. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina experienced great pride when performing, especially in her last performance. She was able to perform *Huizache*, which was a dance that few of the dancers were able to perform due to the complexity of the dance as well as the necessary work with her partner. Gina performed this dance with a partner she had grown up with while participating in the folklórico. She had humorous memories of dancing with Robert when they were young, and she was a foot taller than he was. When Gina discussed her pride and confidence in performing *Huizache*, her pride and confidence in her partner, someone she grew up with while participating in the folklórico program was evident. The familial capital Gina gained through folklórico endured from childhood through adulthood.

The dancers shared the importance of the opportunity to shine, feel acknowledged and feel valued through performance. Laura explained:

I just felt beautiful, and like, to see the looks on people's faces, like it was making them super happy, and to see them appreciate Mexican culture. I just thought that was really neat, and I just, I didn't really see them because I didn't have my glasses on so that was another cool thing (laughter). I didn't have to worry about stage fright because I couldn't see

most people. But the ones in the front row, I can see them smiling and howling, you know the old men doing the sounds (*gritos*). (Laura, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Similar to Isabel, Laura had a difficult time during middle school and high school. She endured bullying for the way she looked, the way she talked, and for simply being. All of that negativity disappeared while she was performing. What stood out for Laura was that the audiences appreciated the Mexican culture, and that made her happy. She had a faraway look on her face when she stated that she could still see the faces of the audience, their smiles and hear their *gritos*. In contrast to the reasons that people bullied her, Laura felt beautiful, she felt appreciated, and she felt that what she was doing, bringing the Mexican culture to other people was important.

Finally, the parents and leadership team members confirmed the dancers' statements. For instance, Victor, Jasmine's dad, recalled:

Well I mean confidence is a big factor, and a lot of that stemmed from performing in front of large audiences, and then just, I mean just interacting you know? They both (Jasmine and Carmen) have different personalities. One is shy, and one is not shy. So the shy one, it's harder for her, but the persistence and the confidence that she gained really helped her. (Victor, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

Victor's comments demonstrate how setting and achieving a goal through hard work requires persistence, which results in confidence. Learning a step, dance

or choreography in folklórico requires persistence. The confidence that Jasmine gained through this process was a result of her persistence to reach her goal whether it was to learn a step, a dance or a choreography. Jasmine developed confidence in setting and achieving a goal through perseverance, which she can apply, to all aspects of her life. The persistence required in folklórico programs to learn a step, dance or choreography results in confident young Latinas. This results in young Latinas who know that they can set and achieve a goal by working hard and not giving up.

Folklórico performances served as environments that developed self-confidence and self-esteem. Latinas develop a sense of pride through Folklórico. Dancers develop an awareness that what they learn in folklórico is important. They explained that they began to build a sense of pride and knowledge as they performed and audiences visibly appreciated what they did. Whether it was watching people clap after a performance, or an audience member approaching them for pictures, or people asking questions about their costumes, or dancing in general, they realized that they were presenting their culture to others and began to understand the value of what they did. Furthermore, experiences and interactions with members of the folklórico who were kind and patient also contributed to the dancers' confidence, pride, and self-esteem.

For example, Hannah stated, "Folklórico was something that I was proud of doing, and any time I put on my dress, it just built my confidence. I was beautiful, and I stood out. People noticed me and were interested in talking to

me.” (Hannah, personal communication, September 23, 2018). Hannah’s experience as a folklórico performer helped her to develop a sense of pride. It also built her confidence in herself. Audience members reinforced her confidence and pride because they were interested in talking with her after performances. These experiences provided Hannah the realization that what she did and who she was, was important.

Gina also spoke to the confidence she had when performing. She stated: Well I can’t see the audience, I can’t see the audience, and I’m gonna tell you what too, the makeup was not always pretty, okay? (Laughter) My mom would put it on, the makeup was not always pretty, but you have self-confidence because I knew what I was doing like, I knew that besides the makeup and the hair sometimes, I knew what I was doing out there.

(Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina’s recollection reinforced Hannah’s recollection. Although she was not always happy with how her mother did her makeup or hair, it did not matter because she was confident in her performing abilities. Gina knew what to do, and how to do it. Moreover, her self-confidence was so strong that she knew that nothing could overshadow the fact that she knew what she was doing.

Nancy also discussed how the folklórico contributed to her self-confidence. She stated:

I guess self-confidence. When I was little, I didn’t think I was that great. I don’t know if it was when I was in it, but a while ago, I went, like a long

time ago, I went and I...Angela, she taught me how to, I think it was towards the end of my being in the group before I left, to make the skirts and dresses. So, I think it was like for the Colima, that dress that I wore at my last performance, I helped her make it, and I had picked all the colors that were on the dress, and I still sew because I have a sewing machine at home. I still sew here and there, I've made pillows, skirts, little bows, just things like that. (Nancy, personal communication, October 6, 2018).

When Nancy was in the folklórico program, a leader in the folklórico taught her how to sew. Nancy was able to pick out the colors, and Angela guided her on how to make the dress. The kindness and interest that Angela showed her was vital for her because she was not confident in herself. Nancy now has a sewing machine at home, and she still sews to this day. The memory of learning how to make folklórico costumes was important to Nancy because she connected it to her confidence.

Jasmine also recalled how participating in the folklórico program led to confidence. She stated:

I think my confidence did get a boost because, you know, my sister was also in the group, and when she left, it was more about myself, and then I had to work my way up to be more on the same level with the other dancers. That helped me to be more confident being here at school by myself. (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

Jasmine joined the folklórico several years after her sister. As the younger sister, she felt overshadowed by her sister Carmen because she had been in the folklórico program longer, and was more outgoing than Jasmine. When Carmen left the group, it was Jasmine's time to shine. She worked very hard to become a member of the more advanced group and was able to do that on her own. This created a confidence in Jasmine that she used when she moved so far away from home. This confidence served her well, as Jasmine left her hometown in Southern California to go to college in Northern California. It was quite a distance from her home and not within driving distance. She is about to graduate with a Bachelor's degree in June 2019.

Parents and leadership team members confirmed the dancers' statements. For instance, Patricia, Olivia's mother, recalled:

She (Olivia) became more confident because she was overweight. She's always been overweight, and it made her feel good because she could do this as an overweight child. Well, that confidence continued for the rest of her life. I'm glad she's confident because she was very shy, and one of the reasons I put her in the program, she had a few friends, but not a lot, because they teased her, you know, but nobody in folklórico ever did that to her. (Patricia, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

Patricia's comments are valuable because they emphasize the kindness and familial capital that is present in folklórico programs and how they contribute to confidence. Folklórico gave Olivia a feeling of accomplishment and negated the

teasing she received from kids during her middle school and high school years because of her weight. Olivia realized that her weight had no bearing on what she could accomplish. Also, the relationships she built with her fellow dancers also developed a level of trust which she could rely on.

Sandra, Laura's mother, also agreed, and noted,

That was the huge win out of the whole situation. She (Laura) is good enough, she knows that she is good enough, and she's not stupid and that she can, if she really puts her mind to something, not only can she learn to dance but she can pass. She can do this if she really gets herself together. (Sandra, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

Overall, the Latina participants who were involved in folklórico developed a strong sense of self along with pride, confidence, and self-esteem that is lasting and applicable to all aspects of their lives.

Deep and Lasting Relationships and Connections. Latinas develop strong and lasting relationships and connections while participating in folklórico programs. Dancers described the friendships and relationships they built with other dancers as deep and lasting. These relationships contributed to the accumulation of social, familial, and navigational capital.

When we discussed the friendships and relationships built while participating in folklórico programs, Hannah stated:

I built very deep relationships with the other dancers and my aunts and cousins who were also part of the group. It was nice to have that

extended family that was there to support me. The people I performed with became my family, we were very close, and some of us still are today. I feel great about them because I know they're always thinking of me or I'm thinking of them, and we still have that connection. (Hannah, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

Hannah's relationships have lasted for many years. Though some of the dancers were relatives to her, she felt that shared interest in folklórico made their relationships deeper. She also developed an extended family that she knew that she could count on so many years later. Hannah's experience demonstrates the familial capital acquired through folklórico programs.

Laura mentioned that although she did not develop relationships with every dancer, she built strong friendships with others. She stated:

Oh, I built so much from the first day. I built a friendship with Carla; she was my first friend. Carla and there were a few people I didn't get along with, but that's okay, you know. Jasmine and Carmen, I definitely created a huge friendship with them. I'm still friends with them. We fell off a little bit, but that's okay. We've been friends for, that one's probably ten years too, like a ten-year friendship. I definitely wasn't friends with everyone. I was friends with Robert, and kind of the ones that just wanted to dance. (Laura, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Laura built relationships with dancers that shared her love of folklórico. Although she did not develop lasting relationships with all of the dancers, she made several friendships that continue to this day.

Gina detailed the depth of her friendships. She stated:

I want to say, when I was a kid, I mean we were always hanging out, you know. We were always going to performances, and we were at practices twice a week, so we seen each other a lot you know and you build those friendships even outside of there. I think it was Alicia, one of them was Alicia. I would go to her house, and we would hang out and play or whatever, but as I got older too, I noticed that those friendships are still around. Everybody goes to everybody's functions when you're growing up, having kids, getting married, things of that nature, so everybody's still close. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina remembered play dates with other dancers and going to each other's homes. She confirmed that these relationships are long-lasting and still exist. In addition, familial capital is present in her comments regarding how the folklórico family grows together and are included in each other's' lives from growing up to having their own children, and marriages.

Gina is also a member of the leadership team as an instructor, and she explained how dancers build relationships and how these relationships become lasting. She explained:

Ummm, I think the younger we bring them in, the more closer that they grow up. They literally grow up together. Some of them go to school together; they're with each other so much between two practices a week, and then performances all year round. They just create their little friendships, you know, and even outside of dance, that's what it is. I mean when they get to teenagers and start dating, it's a whole different ball game (laughter), but as kids, their friendships are, they are lasting friendships. They last for a very long time, and they know each other for the rest of their lives because they have something in common that they love, and that they are passionate about. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

From a leadership perspective, Gina views relationship and friendship building from a different lens. From the leadership lens, she sees the same thing; that dancers develop long-lasting relationships with other dancers primarily because they spend so much time together. Dancers also share a passion for folklórico, which connects them for the rest of their lives.

The Folklórico Family. People who participate in folklórico programs post the hashtag #FolklóricoFamily on social media. This term resonated with all of the dancers as well as their parents and members of the leadership team. This term signifies the importance of the relationships in folklórico that become extended family. Latinas acquire familial capital within these extended families.

Hannah discussed her feelings about the term folklórico family. She stated:

Like I said earlier, everybody that I danced with when I was younger, I mean, I still consider them my family. I run into people I haven't seen in years, and the first thing you do is go in for a hug, you know you never shy away from that. Everybody is always welcome, and everybody's always welcoming and very warm. (Hannah, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

Hannah smiled as she talked about the folklórico family. She spoke of the acceptance and warmth that exists within the folklórico family and lasts for years.

Isabel discussed folklórico family further. She stated:

You make connections with people that last so long even after the fact. Like I'm still friends with some of the folklórico dancers on social media who are not even in this country anymore, but I still see them and talk to them, and it just, it builds a bond that is like a family. Like no matter how far you go, no matter how far apart you are, or how long you go even without talking, you can just come back, and you have that love for something that connects you. (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

Isabel referred to the connection that develops and lasts between folklórico family members. Time or distance have not diminished this connection.

Gina discussed folklórico family in more detail from a leadership perspective. She stated:

Yes because they are literally my blood relatives (laughter), they are literally my family but other than that. I mean we still have folklórico family, you know like the Ayala family, and even the relationships that build right now, you know the kids. I look at them like, they're all, like Jeanette and the Ramirez's. You know Jeanette is always going to have a soft spot in my heart you know. You get to see them grow up, and so that's the biggest thing, being able to see them grow up, that's where I think the family is because it's beautiful to watch them, and sometimes it's sad. I mean Anita had to see me go through my struggles, you know. She probably was like let's just pull you back over here, but for the most part, we got a lot of good kids, we, thank God, we have a lot of good kids, you know, because if there were a lot of them like me, well... (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina's leadership perspective was emotional. While she discussed the importance of folklórico family and the emotional connections she has made with the younger dancers, she also discussed her difficulties. Gina thought about Jeanette and the joy in witnessing her grow up from the age of five to 18 and going off to college. It made her reflect on another leader, Anita who was there through her own struggles with addiction. Like any other family, the folklórico family is there through good times and bad and is a support system to its

members. The familial capital was evident in each of the participants' discussions about folklórico family.

Parents also felt that they were a member of the folklórico family during the time their daughters were participating in folklórico. Sandra explained:

Okay, you care about each other, so I'm thinking just about practices. We come together, okay...how's it going in school, are you having trouble getting this together, oh you need a new costume...we're just concerned about the wellbeing of everybody. You care when somebody's hurt, we go to each other's houses occasionally, and you just have a common respect for everybody for the most part. (Sandra, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

Sandra's comments reflect that the familial capital within folklórico programs applies not only to folklórico related matters. There is a concern for school, life and the general wellbeing of each of its members.

Tina mentioned trust. She stated,

The kids all seemed to get along and look out for each other, and kind of helped to care for each other. So kind of like the older kids always looked after the little ones, and so even like for instance, when we would go to Disneyland, I was always comfortable leaving her (Karina) with the group, knowing that she would be taken care of and that she wouldn't wander off. I always felt safe doing that, and I wouldn't have said that with every group

that we were involved with. (Tina, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

Parents are always concerned with the wellbeing of their children. Typically, we trust our families to watch over our children. Tina's comments indicated the trust she had in her folklórico family. She would not have entrusted the care of her daughter to just anyone. However, when it came to entrusting her daughter to her folklórico family, she was always confident that her daughter would be safe.

Brianna and Edward explained the term folklórico family from the perspective of a member of the leadership team.

Our dance group is a family. We are here for each other. We take care of and help each other. It's the feeling you get when you see your extended family for a family event. You are just happy to see them. However, I would like to point out that we see our folklórico family more than our extended family. (Brianna, personal communication, September 6, 2018).

Edward explained the idea of a folklórico family further:

Our folklórico is a family. We are strong enough as a family to share each other's burdens, dance related or not. We pick up each other's slack when necessary, as do our dancers. As with any family, you get out of it what you put into it. (Edward, personal communication, September 6, 2018).

The support systems developed in folklórico are lasting and profound, and withstand the test of time. The level of trust that parents placed in the folklórico

program to care for their children is a testament to the familial capital developed in these programs. Also, many of the participants in this study had been away from the folklórico program for many years; however, the familial capital continued to exist as participants in this study still considered past members of the folklórico as extended family.

Folklórico programs are reliable and supportive, and members share their joys and sorrows. There was a confidence in dancers that the dancers, parents, and leadership team of the folklórico program would be supportive in any situation.

Olivia discussed the difficulties of moving to a new town with no friends. She stated, “Middle school...that’s when we moved to another town, so that was a time of fitting in at a new school and not having any friends, but I always had my dancer friends to fall back on.” (Olivia, personal communication, October 20, 2018). Olivia was confident that even though she had no friends at her new school, she always had her folklórico friends. Support systems are essential during the middle school and high school years, and this folklórico program served as that support system for Olivia. Gina also discussed the folklórico as a support system. She stated:

For me, well you create relationships. Obviously, you create those friendships, and it was, it was my, it was always my go to. I remember with my first, I guess you can call my first incident or episode with substance abuse, going to the therapy with my mom, and the counselor or

therapist asked me, you know, what was your happy place? And dancing was always my happy place, and so I still go back to it. That's my go to, at 32 years old; I still go back to it because that what takes me home. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina became very emotional at this point in the interview as she remembered how folklórico always made her happy. Gina's experience with substance abuse occurred during a time when she left the folklórico in high school. Through therapy during her recovery, she rediscovered her love of folklórico.

Because of Latinas acquired familial capital while participating in folklórico programs, they were able to depend on their extended folklórico family when they encountered difficulties in their lives. These support systems endure and continue to be available throughout the dancers' lives. Similarly, the connections that Latinas developed within the folklórico program provided both navigational and social capital.

Social and Navigational Capital through Connections. Isabel used her folklórico network to help her when she was seeking employment and needed recommendations for her applications. Folklórico programs not only provide dancers with skills and abilities, but their leadership members can attest to the qualities of their participants. Isabel explained, "I didn't have job experience, but then I realized that the skills I used for the dance group were helpful. I got letters of recommendation from dance group leaders, and I was able to submit those." (Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

When Isabel began the process of applying for employment, she did not have prior job experience. After some thought, she realized the importance of the skills she developed while she participated in the folklórico program. Isabel contacted leaders of the folklórico program and asked for letters of recommendation, which they were happy to provide. She successfully used these letters of recommendation to secure employment.

Hannah noted that people she grew up with in folklórico were able to assist her in other aspects of her life. In this case, Hannah needed assistance with a mechanical problem. She also noted that she could depend on her folklórico network if she ever needed any type of support. She stated,

Well you know, I mean I can always ask for information that I need you know. And well Robert you know, when my air conditioner goes out, I contact Robert to come and help me, and I mean I don't know. Like I said Robert and Anita, and I just know that being a part of the folklórico and the people that I am still in contact with, if I needed anything, they would be more than willing to help me in any situation. (Hannah, personal communication, September 23, 2018).

Hannah was secure in the knowledge that she could ask her folklórico contacts for support at any time, for any situation. She recounted a time when she was having problems with her air conditioner, and she remembered that one of her dancer friends was an air conditioner technician and asked him for help, which he readily supplied.

Olivia was going through a difficult time due to her parents' divorce. The divorce caused changes in her life that damaged her sense of stability. Olivia valued the skills she gained from folklórico and wanted to pass it down:

Well, I think like Vivian because I forget that she helped us a lot going to high school because I was no longer in the district and when we when my parents were getting divorced I moved to my grandparents' house in another district. And so I wanted to continue in the same district because I didn't want to go to the other district. Vivian allowed us to use her address so I could continue going to school. And she also taught me how to drive a stick shift. I mean I wish my children could be dancing now just to get that social aspect and the skills that you learn and that experience and everything like that. (Olivia, personal communication, October 20, 2018).

During a period of transition, a parent in the folklórico stepped in to provide her the ability to stay within this district and have at least one constant during that difficult time. Olivia was sad when she noted that due to her location, she is unable to enroll her children in a folklórico program. She felt that the skills and social aspects of being part of folklórico would benefit them.

Gina faced difficulty due to substance abuse. A parent offered to care for her child until she was able to. Though that was unnecessary, this same parent provided Gina an opportunity to get back into the workforce and rebuild her confidence:

Well, I gotta say, Ms. Felicia. She gave me a chance, she really did. I guess she'd seen something in me obviously that I didn't see in myself like I had already labeled myself. But even before my son was born, I think she approached my mom and told her that she would take my son if I couldn't take care of him. And after that, she seen the progress I was starting to make and sobering up, and she basically offered me a job and that started building my self-confidence back up. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Felicia was instrumental in building up Gina's confidence in herself after a challenging time in her life. She did not have a good opinion of herself and did not have a sense of self-worth. As Gina came out of the addiction and began her recovery, Felicia found a way to build up Gina's confidence and self-esteem. This opportunity was vital at that point in Gina's life. Gina is now a substance abuse counselor.

This social and navigational capital extended between parents as well. One parent was able to navigate a new school district due to his connections in the folklórico. Also, the folklórico was able to use a school facility due to this connection:

Well, Claudia, I mean she really helped especially, I mean getting the kids through school and registering and also because the folklórico practiced at a school facility, and so having that connection and her knowledge of the

people there really helped the folklórico to have a place to practice.

(Victor, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

When Victor had to enroll his children in a new school, his connection with Claudia was helpful. Claudia's assistance in navigating that system made the experience easier for all of them. In addition, Claudia's connections with the school district assisted the folklórico program with obtaining a practice space.

Other parents were able to seek information on employment for their families due to folklórico connections. Some parents had unique positions that were a benefit to dancers and parents:

Well maybe not so much for my kids, but I would ask Claudia for information about the school district. I would ask if they were hiring, or what the current job situation was. Also, Vivian, I would ask her about jobs for my son, but also she would give out ashes, and she would be there to give out ashes when we couldn't make it to (Ash Wednesday) mass because of practice. (Sandra, personal communication, October 13, 2018).

When Sandra was seeking to move to a new school district for employment, Claudia was able to provide information regarding her district's employment situation. Sandra also mentioned the importance of a parent in the folklórico who was a Eucharistic minister for the Catholic Church. The folklórico program had rehearsal nights on Wednesday nights and each year, Ash Wednesday was difficult as they wanted their children to get their ashes, but they also wanted

them to attend rehearsals. Vivian stepped in every Ash Wednesday, gave the blessing, and distributed ashes for those dancers and parents who were interested. Many of the members of the folklórico appreciated this service.

Extended family associated with the folklórico were able to step in and help other parents with their children:

Yeah well Angel was the spouse of someone in the group, and he was a help to the girls because they were raised by a single mom. So he came alongside as a father figure so to speak, and he kind of helped them out especially when it came to boys, or if there was any issues that they were having at school, you know, he always told them that they could come and talk to him any time. (Claudia, personal communication, November 3, 2018).

Claudia was a single mother with two daughters. Angel was a father figure to her daughters during their middle school and high school years. He was able to provide guidance and advice on subjects that they did not want to discuss with their mother. He was always available to them, and they frequently had discussions with him regarding problems they were dealing with in school.

As a leader in the folklórico, Edward shared how his connections in the folklórico have assisted him and his family. Edward stated,

My family has personally shared childcare duties with other families/parents in the folklórico. We support one another with transportation to not only dance related functions but also school and

other life commitments. My daughter's quince court were comprised entirely of the group three dancers from our folklórico. My wife mentored one of our instructors, mother to mother. (Edward, personal communication, September 6, 2018).

Edward mentioned an important support system that existed within this folklórico. Many of the dancers attended the same schools, and parents would get together to share childcare duties due to differing schedule. Parents would also provide transportation when other parents could not get their children to performances or rehearsals. Also, parents helped other dancers prepare for performances by doing their hair or makeup, or helping with costume changes during a performance if the parent was unavailable.

The experiences of the dancers and parents in the folklórico demonstrate the folklórico network. Their experiences also illustrate how the connections made by participating in community-based folklórico programs continue to be resources for the rest of their life.

Folklórico and the Development of Resistant Capital. Latinas often face social barriers and obstacles in their lives; resistant capital is vital for addressing these obstacles and barriers. Through folklórico performances, the dancers met situations and people that were sometimes negative and could have been damaging to their confidence or self-esteem.

For instance, some of the dancers and parents referred to several incidents that occurred with a group of people who I came to call "the infamous

belly dancers.” They were a group of predominantly older white women who performed at various county fairs at some of the same venues where the dancers performed.

Isabel clearly remembered the belly dancers and noted the role of parents and their influence in developing resistant capital. Isabel stated,

We had issues with some belly dancers a couple of times. They were horrible. They wanted us to move out of the tents because they wanted to get ready for their performance when they were already dressed and ready to go. And we weren't even halfway done with our performance which was just a ridiculous thing to request. It made me feel super mad that they, it was like this sense of entitlement that they had that they were better, and could do whatever they wanted and we just had to be like 'Okay, let me move my things for you.' That was very frustrating. I know some of the parents who found out what was going on refused to move out of the tent and just stood in the doorway and they were like, nope, you're gonna wait! I learned how to have conflict resolution in a PC way because I was not very PC when it happened. Conflict resolution, but to also not back down. No one person or group is better than another.

(Isabel, personal communication, September 26, 2018).

Isabel's recollection is powerful. It was apparent to her that there was a sense of entitlement with this group of older white women. In addition, she felt that the expectation from these women was for her and the other folklórico dancers to

move aside and get out of the way, and this made her angry. She smiled as she remembered watching the parents stand in the doorway and resist the women's entitlement. She saw that taking a stand did not necessitate angry words, and there was power in the parents' silence. At that moment, Isabel realized that angry words are not required in this type of situation, but that does not mean you do not defend yourself. She also realized that there are people who will make you feel less than, but it does not mean that you are. This experience solidified Isabel's resistant capital.

When Jasmine discussed negative feelings she might have experienced because of participating in the folklórico, she also remembered the belly dancers:

I don't think I ever encountered any kind of negative feelings towards us while I was a performer. I think the closest we ever got was the belly dancers. Sometimes you know, you would get there early, and you would want to look at the space, but the belly dancers ladies would just, I don't know they just seemed very territorial when they were using the space. Well, they had to let us in the space most of the time, but they just always gave us dirty looks, and we would just do our thing, and they would do their thing. I learned that you can't change anybody. Somebody's gonna have an attitude you're not gonna like, but you can't go out of your way to try and appease them when you know you're not going to be able to change them. (Jasmine, personal communication, September 27, 2018).

Like Isabel, Jasmine realized through these encounters with the belly dancers, that what another person does or thinks should not affect her. She realized that you could not change someone if you do not like their attitude, and what is important is not to change yourself or your goals to make others happy. She realized her sense of self.

Jasmine's father Victor remembered the belly dancers and noted that he had conversations with Jasmine about these incidents. He recalled,

We would take these situations and discuss them and then just move on because it's like there's no point. There was never any point in confronting anybody, or dwelling on it because it's just people are, stuff like that, is always going to happen and not everybody's gonna see things the same way or like what you do. (Victor, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

Parents often used these incidents of marginalization to help their children develop the tools they would need to navigate future experiences. Jasmine's experience demonstrated her resistant capital; furthermore, the discussion with her father solidified this resistant capital.

Gina remembered negativity from kids with whom she grew up. However, she did not allow this negativity to affect her love for folklórico. Gina also noted how folklórico was a comfort to her, and she returned after she faced the difficulties of life. She stated,

Maybe like the kids, the kids I used to go to school with or whatever. But that never lasted for very long. I don't know if it was just more me of being embarrassed because I knew I was different, or if any of them said anything. I think they were too afraid of me to say anything to me to tell you the honest truth. I think they were too afraid, but you know it just wasn't normal to them. It wasn't. Like the makeup, and the hair, and the dresses, and the music and stuff like that you know. But I don't know, no other than that, no but I still stuck with it, and I notice that it's the age we start to lose them too. I've always had anger issues that I was never able to process, so I'm not sure if I necessarily learned anything positive from it, other than like, I didn't really care what they had to say. At the end of the day, I didn't really care what they had to say because I loved dancing. Like that was going to overpower and overtrump everything. The softball, everything. I loved dancing. I wish it had overpowered drugs, but you know, I came back to it because that's my happy place. (Gina, personal communication, October 23, 2018).

Gina's resistant capital was a result of her love for folklórico. It overpowered any negative comments she heard during her participation in the folklórico program. Gina also spoke to the power that folklórico had in her life. Throughout her life, she never lost sight of the importance of folklórico in her life. During her recovery from substance abuse, she came back to folklórico because it was what made her happy.

Laura experienced negativity from random people that she came across while performing at a fair. As she related this experience, her confidence shone through. Laura stated,

We would just get a lot of just weird looking faces, just like why are you dressed that way? Just weird looks or just from other dance groups.

They would look at us because we were competition, and without a doubt, we were the best. I think I remember at one of the fairs, me and my brother were making our way to the stage, and these two guys and their girlfriends were just looking at us so weird, and I know it made my brother feel uncomfortable at first. And then we went up there, and by the end of the dance their faces actually changed, and they were like amazed. So it changed, but it was definitely negative at first, and it made us feel kind of weird, and then my brother and I just kinda zoned out and did our own thing. I learned that not everyone's really gonna like what you do, but really, to me, all that matters is like if you want to do it who cares what this person thinks. If you like to dance, then you can dance. If this person thinks you look weird, so what? If you want to wear that, then that's you, and that's just gonna be everywhere you go. Middle school, high school, it's sort of a life lesson, definitely. (Laura, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Laura's experience, while different from the other dancers interviewed, resulted in the same confidence and sense of self. The situation made her feel

uncomfortable, but her confidence and pride in herself and her abilities overshadowed any negative feelings elicited by others. Resistant capital was a life lesson to her that has remained in her life in any situation.

Members of the leadership team are instrumental in addressing adverse situations that arise for folklórico dancers. With their actions, they contributed to the resistant capital that dancers developed. Brianna stated,

During a performance for Cinco de Mayo at an elementary school, a dancer performed a Vera Cruz dance by herself, and all it took is one little girl in the audience to laugh at her bow or headpiece. She started telling other kids, and they were all laughing. When the dance was done, she was upset and said that the kids were laughing at her. I talked to her to try to make her feel better. I don't know if she actually felt better after our conversation, but she did continue to perform. (Brianna, personal communication, September 6, 2018).

Brianna's recollection shows that despite these negative encounters, it did not stop these dancers from performing or giving up on something they truly loved. These experiences illustrate that resistance capital developed within this folklórico program. Through the various performance venues, dancers encounter all types of people and situations. Though they may meet people who try to make them feel bad about themselves by the way they look at them or the things they say around them, folklórico dancers counteract these adverse situations with the knowledge that what others think or say will not keep them

from reaching their goals, or doing what needs to be done. These interactions demonstrate how Latinas develop a strong sense of self by being involved in folklórico. The ability to rise above these barriers and obstacles with confidence and strength is essential for young Latinas to be successful.

Summary

Along with skills, Latinas who participate in folklórico programs develop qualities that apply to their lives outside of folklórico for the rest of their lives. The experiences of the dancers led to the development of skills and qualities that define strong Latinas. Community cultural wealth was weaved throughout the lessons learned by the dancers as they developed these skills and qualities. A folklórico cycle emerged through the data analysis that is depicted in Figure 2. In addition, a continuous leadership development cycle emerged that redefined the basis of leadership to be helping others. The dancers acquired various forms of capital throughout this development that they have been able to operationalize in their daily lives as they relate to education, career, and life in general.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

My experiences over the past thirty years as a folklórico instructor motivated me to take on this study. I have witnessed the skills and qualities that young Latinas gain while participating in folklórico programs, and have been troubled that many of these young women do not pursue college after high school completion, or complete a degree if they do attend college. The Latinas who participate in folklórico programs are a microcosm of the larger problem of Latinas who do not pursue or complete college. Both Gándara (2015) and Pérez Huber, et al. (2015) provide compelling evidence that studies are necessary to address the growing Latina population given the Latina education pipeline.

Overview

Previous studies have examined the effects of participating in folklórico programs in relation to education. For example, Meeker (2016) discussed the connection between Latina/o students' participation in folklórico programs and improved student outcomes in school using the lens of community cultural wealth and critical consciousness. Pérez López (2017) explored the role of identity, community, and agency in shaping the lived experiences for Mexican dance students in higher education through the lens of community cultural wealth and social justice cultural performance. Previous studies have not focused

specifically on Latina folklórico dancers as a microcosm of the larger problem of the representation of Latinas in higher education. Nor have previous studies focused on the influence of folklórico programs on the post-secondary education aspirations of Latina participants. Finally, previous studies have not focused on how Latinas who participate in folklórico programs operationalize the transferrable skills they learn in folklórico programs to education and career goals and life in general. This study aims to fill these gaps.

Through the lens of community cultural wealth (Rendón, et. al., 2014; Yosso, 2005;), and using case study as the methodology, data collection transpired through a focus group, individual semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The participants of the study were Latinas between the ages of 18 and 40, who participated in a community-based folklórico program for at least two years during their middle school and high school years. The lived experiences of the Latinas in this study were essential to understand their aspirations, the impact that participating in folklórico had on their lives, and how their participation influenced their aspirations. In addition, this study sought to examine the skills developed by participating in a community-based folklórico program, as well as how these skills were transferable to education and career goals or life in general. The parents of the former dancers, as well as the leadership team of the folklórico group examined in this case study, participated for purposes of alternative perspectives and triangulation of the data. The case study method supported the examination of the influence of the community-

based folklórico program on their lives through their own experiences.

The research on the representation of Latina's in higher education is quite stark. Given the current situation of Latinas in higher education and the projections for the Latina population, it is imperative that research address new avenues and opportunities for increasing the success of Latinas pursuing and completing post-secondary education.

Summary of the Study

This study was guided by three research questions: What were the post-secondary and career aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program during middle school and/or high school? How does participating in a folklórico program influence the college and career aspirations of Latinas, if at all? What skills are developed by participating in folklórico programs that are transferable to educational and career goals or life in general?

The questions were examined by using a qualitative case study methodology. Data collection methods included; individual semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and document analysis. The participants were former dancers between the ages of 18 and 40, who participated in a community-based folklórico program during their middle school or high school years for at least two consecutive years. Parents of the former dancers also participated in this study, as well as members of the leadership team of a community-based folklórico program.

Each of the former dancer participants shared their folklórico journeys, which started when they were very young and lasted for a minimum of ten years. They also discussed their education journeys and ultimately their career journeys. This exploration of their lived experiences supported the case study research method and provided a view into their lives.

The first question examined the post-secondary and career aspirations of Latinas who participated in a community-based folklórico program during middle school and high school. This question provided the opportunity for the participants to reflect on their aspirations during middle school and high school while they participated in a community-based folklórico program. Both the participants and their parents responded to questions in individual interviews related to the participants' aspirations. All of the dancers in this study had strong aspirational capital. Consistent with Zambrana and Burciaga (2015), and Sanchez et al. (2005) parents and other family member significantly influenced the participants in their educational aspirations. Correspondingly, consistent with Espino (2016), and Rosas and Hamrick (2002), consistent messaging and encouragement were important factors in fostering educational aspirations for the participants. Though some of the participants did receive encouragement and consistent messaging from school sources, more often than not, they lacked the knowledge necessary to achieve their aspirations. This is consistent with Zalaquett (2005) in that even though parents were supportive of the former dancers' educational aspirations, frequently the students did not have the

necessary information to make good choices.

The second question explored how and if participating in a community-based folklórico program influenced the college and career aspirations of the participants in this study. The parent perspective was also included to triangulate the data. Dancers and parents indicated that participating in the folklórico program afforded them exposure to new people, space and experiences that they would have otherwise not have experienced. These experiences provided the dancers with the ability to adapt to different environments easily. In addition, the dancers and parents noted the strong role models that existed within the folklórico program. These role models were instructors, directors, parents and older dancers who were all members of the folklórico program. These role models within folklórico programs could be ideal institutional agents. Stanton-Salazar (2011) refers to institutional agents as individuals who possess human, cultural and social capital and transmit resources, opportunities, privileges, and services to benefit others. Finally, the former dancers and parents indicated participating in the folklórico program modeled how to set and achieve goals, which they have used in other aspects of their lives. Community cultural wealth was evident in examining the influence of folklórico programs on the aspirations of Latinas as aspirational, familial and perseverance capital was apparent in the data.

The final question examined the skills transferable to educational, career and life goals that dancers develop while participating in a community-based

folklórico program. Analysis of the data associated with transferable skills that develop while participating in folklórico programs resulted in the emergence of the folklórico cycle. This cycle starts with the development of skills that contribute to the development of qualities, which results in the acquisition of various capitals. The dancers in their everyday lives operationalized these skills, qualities, and capitals. The dancers were able to adapt this cycle to education, career, and life in general. Almost all of the capitals of community cultural wealth as described by Yosso (2005), and Rendón et al., (2014) were apparent. For example, dancers, parents and the leadership of the folklórico noted the development of communication, collaboration (teamwork), and interpersonal skills. While building these skills, qualities emerged such as confidence, and assertiveness. The process of gaining these skills and qualities resulted in former dancers acquiring different forms of capital. The ability to operationalize the skills, qualities and capitals in their daily lives illustrated the impact that the folklórico program had on young Latinas. Dancers were able to shift their use of skills, qualities, and capitals from the folklórico environment to the college or career environment. Specific examples are Jasmine and Karina who were both able to transfer their skills, qualities, and capitals to the college environment when they moved far away from home to attend college. Also, Gina and Isabel were able to transfer their skills, qualities, and capitals to the work environment.

Contributions to Existing Research

The present study contributes to existing research in the following ways. First, while community cultural wealth Yosso (2005) and Rendón et al. (2014) conceptualized community cultural wealth, and identified and explained the various forms of capital, as Rios-Aguilar and colleagues (2011) noted, literature on funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth encourage educational leaders and teachers to recognize these assets. Rios-Aguilar and colleagues did not believe that simply recognizing these assets would necessarily help students reach their goals, and suggested that future research focus on specific mechanisms to activate or mobilize capital. The present study demonstrates the operationalization of the capitals included in community cultural wealth by recognizing the folklórico cycle that occurs within this folklórico program.

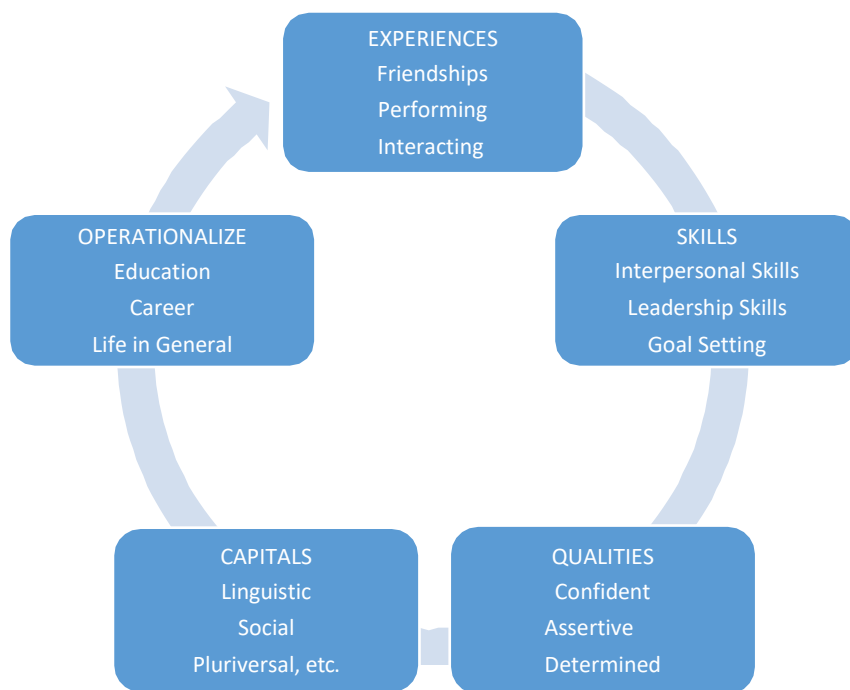


Figure 2. Folklorico Cycle.

The folklorico cycle illustrates how Latinas apply the skills, qualities, and capitals developed by participating in a community-based folklorico program. In addition, the folklorico cycle demonstrates that Latinas easily applied these components to any environment, whether it was education, career or life in general.

Second, while Yosso (2005) conceptualized community cultural wealth, this study revealed the connections between capitals. In particular, the dancers spoke about the need to work together to achieve a goal, which connected both

linguistic, and social capital. In this process, the strengthening of linguistic capital was evident as communication and collaboration were necessary for dancers to work together. Simultaneously, the relationships and connections built during this process strengthened social capital. Also, because of the expectations of the folklórico program; both aspirational and perseverance capital were connected through hard work, responsibility, and accountability.

Third, the experiences of the dancers redefine the development of leadership. Meeker (2016) indicated that one hope of the folklórico instructors in her study was that dance would lead to leadership skills in their dancers. In the present study, several of the dancers explained that for each of them, the leadership skills they developed by participating in the folklórico program were apparent to others and they developed their leadership skills by helping others. The dancers also came to understand that the basis of leadership is helping others to excel by passing on knowledge and skills that will make them successful. These leadership opportunities were not available to the former dancers in the middle school and high school environment.

In addition, this study showed that the development of leadership skills occurred as the former dancers progressed through the folklórico program and appeared to be a continuous process that repeated with each new group of dancers. Along the way, the former dancers were reinforcing expectations and demonstrating how to set goals and work hard to accomplish those goals to the younger dancers, thus becoming role models themselves to younger dancers.

These dancers joined this folklórico group when they were very young. The dancers indicated that older dancers, who they saw as leaders, were role models in the folklórico program who influenced them. As these young dancers progressed through the folklórico program and grew older and more experienced, they, in turn, became leaders in the folklórico program by helping younger dancers. The assistance they gave to younger dancers occurred as they progressed into more advanced groups within the program. Through this study, the former dancers were able to articulate how they were able to apply their leadership skills to education, college, and life in general, and their leadership skills were apparent to others around them including coworkers, fellow students, or supervisors.

Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Given the increasing proportion of Latinas to the general population, the exploration of all opportunities to achieve a higher rate of Latinas who pursue and complete college is essential. Previous research indicates that outreach programs such as TRIO programs have a positive impact on the aspirations and goals towards college for students (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). Pitre & Pitre (2009) suggest that school leaders could develop college preparation experiences and activities such as; college field trips, information sessions on a college campus, college student panels and other activities that collaborate students with university students and staff in various community outreach projects. Partnerships such as these would translate well between community-based

folklórico programs and institutions of higher education. Within the United States, there are multitudes of community-based folklórico programs that are not associated with schools or colleges. Higher education institutes cannot merely have folklórico programs available to students who attend; they must be intentional about outreach to small community-based folklórico programs. Outreach to community-based folklórico programs by institutions of higher education should promote the existence of folklórico programs as a benefit to attending the institution. More importantly, colleges and universities need to develop pathways to college as an effective way to reach a population of Latinas who already have the tools necessary to pursue and complete college successfully.

Latina folklórico dancers already have the skills and qualities necessary to be successful in higher education, and the ability to adapt these skills to a college environment. Latina folklórico dancers also have community cultural wealth, which includes aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistance, perseverance, ethnic consciousness, and pluriversal capital that will aid them to succeed in higher education, which they can apply to the post-secondary environment. Institutes of higher education must supply the information, knowledge, and guidance necessary for their aspirations to be achievable.

Similarly, community-based folklórico programs also have a role to play in building bridges with institutions of higher education in their local areas. Building relationships with colleges and universities will be necessary to ensure the

development of a college-going environment within the folklórico program. Building these relationships will require the leadership team to take on the additional task of building a college-going culture within the folklórico program. Also, role models within the folklórico program will need to be those “human bridges” or institutional agents that Stanton Salazar (2011) references in his research to ensure the development of pathways to higher education for their dancers. Developing these pathways will include organizing college tours, sessions, panels, and visits with college or university students targeted not only at the dancers but also at their parents. Finally, there must be an intentional effort by leaders of the folklórico program to ensure that the development of dancers’ skills includes consistent messaging about how to use these skills in relation to college attendance. Finally, the establishment of an informal mentoring component within folklórico programs that provides adequate could contribute to the pursuit of post-secondary education for young Latinas.

Next Steps for Educational Reform

As stated at the beginning of the study, most community-based folklórico programs exist due to volunteers. There are limited resources that typically consist of donations, memberships and performance fees. Something as simple as an increase in rent for rehearsal space can have a devastating effect on these programs. Additional costs include costumes, makeup, music, travel costs, etc. For a program such as the case study program, participation in conferences are mainly dependent on a “good year” of donations or special fundraisers. Many

times dancers are unable to attend due to lack of funds.

Policymakers at the state and city level should consider community-based folklórico programs for funding allocations through grants supporting the collaboration of these programs with institutes of higher education. In addition, education institutions could quickly support community-based folklórico programs by providing rehearsal space at a reduced fee, or even at no cost. This would relieve significant financial pressure on small community-based folklórico programs and would encourage the continued impact folklórico programs have on young Latinas.

The enhancement of existing YMCA or after school folklórico programs to create environments similar to community-based folklórico programs that foster the development of skills, qualities, and capitals could contribute to the development of strong Latinas who are prepared to attain a post-secondary education. In my experience, current YMCA and after-school programs are limited in scope and time and have little to no expectations for dancers to be able to perform, save arriving at the performance. While these programs provide valuable exposure to the art of folklórico, culture, and heritage, they do not provide the environment that community-based folklórico programs provide for fostering the development skills, qualities and community cultural wealth that can contribute to the success of Latinas. Over the years, the folklórico program I am involved with has gained dancers from these types of programs who were excited about folklórico but desired a more comprehensive experience.

While there are folklórico programs in some schools, not all schools offer this opportunity. The development of folklórico programs within public schools at all levels would be an exciting prospect. School folklórico programs should be intentional and focused on the development of skills, qualities, and capitals and operationalizing these skills to other aspects of students' lives, most importantly attainment of post-secondary education. An excellent example of this would be the Adelante program noted by Delgado Bernal & Alemán (2017).

Furthermore, it would benefit educational policymakers to continue research on folklórico programs, folklórico dancers and the pathway to college as a means to address the problem of the limited representation of Latinas in higher education.

Recommendations for Future Research

Through this exploration of the lived experiences of Latina folklórico dancers, several other areas of study have arisen that warrant future research. The suggested studies could provide further information related to folklórico programs and the pathway to the attainment of higher education. Further research is necessary because this case study focused on solely one community-based folklórico program. Below is a list of suggested future studies:

- Expansion of this study to a collective case study including more than one community-based folklórico program would help to determine whether the folklórico cycle discovered in this case study applies to other folklórico programs. Also, it might elicit additional information

due to the different experience of dancers in other programs.

- A phenomenological study examining the development of Latinas who participate in folklórico program into strong Latina educational leaders would add to the leadership development process discovered in this case study.
- A qualitative study exploring the development of a college-going component and the creation of pathways from community-based folklórico programs to institutes of higher education from the perspective of community-based folklórico leadership teams and leaders from institutes of higher education would elicit valuable information.
- An experimental design study examining the effect of a college-going component in a folklórico program would provide insight into whether the number of Latinas who pursue and complete college increases in a program of this nature.
- A longitudinal study examining a folklórico program that creates a college-going component into their program would help to explore the long-term effects of a program of this nature.
- Because several of the dancers indicated negative experiences when performing folklórico that appeared to be driven by assumptions of the dominant culture, a study focused on how to strengthen resistant capital and apply it to different environments would also be informative.

- The necessity of moving from and to various sites for performances strengthens pluriversal capital could inform a study on the strength of pluriversal capital and how it enhances feelings of belonging in new or different environments. Future research can also examine the connection between a sense of belonging in various colleges and nomadic theory (Braidotti, 2011).

Each of the suggested studies would expand the current study and offer more focused insight into areas that emerged from this study such as the folklórico cycle and the leadership development process.

Limitations of the Study

This case study focused on one community-based folklórico program located in Southern California. There were several limitations to this study listed below:

First, because this research was a case study design, the results cannot be generalized to a larger population. This study focused on one community-based folklórico program. The experiences of Latinas who participated in other community-based folklórico programs may be very different.

Second, participants who agreed to participate in this study may not be representative of the population. Though I initially had 11 former dancers who were interested in participating in this study, three canceled for various reasons. As it turned out, all of the participants started in the folklórico program when they were very young and were involved for more than ten years. Therefore, former

dancers who participated in the program for only two years may have had different perspectives.

Third, because the main participants were former folklórico dancers, and are no longer participating in the folklórico program as dancers, their memories may not be complete or accurate.

Conclusion

The former dancers in this study shared their memories of participating in a community-based folklórico program during their middle school and high school years. Some of these experiences were deeply personal and had a strong impact on their lives. Parents and leadership team members shared their perspectives as well which helped to triangulate the findings.

The importance of community-based folklórico programs became apparent through the dancers' stories. The development of skills and qualities immersed in community cultural wealth produced strong Latinas who have the tools to navigate not only higher education but also career and everyday life successfully. The ability to transfer skills and qualities developed through participation in folklórico programs, and these skills and qualities is significant. In addition, the connections of the various capitals, and the application of these capitals to their lives is remarkable given that this develops naturally. If the focus of community-based folklórico programs was aimed at the pursuit and attainment of a post-secondary degree, imagine the possibilities.

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPROVALS



August 21, 2018

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Expedited Review

FY2019-10

Status: Approved

Ms. Jenna Aguirre and Prof. Nancy Acevedo-Gil

Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Aguirre and Prof. Acevedo-Gil:

Your application to use human subjects, titled “Dancing Our Way to College: A Case Study of the Post-Secondary Aspirations of Latina Folklórico Dancers and the Role of Community Based Programs as Pathways to College” has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form.

Your application is approved for one year from August 21, 2018 through August 20, 2019.

Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal to ensure you submit the renewal before your protocol study's end date. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the Cayuse IRB System. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in

disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- 1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,**
- 2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,**
- 3) Submit a protocol renewal through the Cayuse IRB System if your study has not been completed.**
- 4) Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB System once your study has been completed.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG



October 29, 2018

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Protocol Change/Modification

IRB-FY2019-10

Status: Approved

Ms. Jennifer Aguirre and Prof. Nancy Acevedo-Gil
COE - Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Aguirre and Prof. Acevedo-Gil:

The protocol change/modification to your application to use human subjects, titled "Dancing Our Way to College: A Case Study of the Post-Secondary Aspirations of Latina Folklorico Dancers and the Role of Community Based Programs as Pathways to College" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). A change in your informed consent requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following by submitting the appropriate form (modification, unanticipated/adverse event, renewal, study closure) through the online Cayuse IRB Submission System.

- 1. If you need to make any changes/modifications to your protocol submit a modification form as the IRB must review all changes before implementing in your study to ensure the degree of risk has not changed.**
- 2. If any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research study or project.**
- 3. If your study has not been completed submit a renewal to the IRB.**
- 4. If you are no longer conducting the study or project submit a study closure.**

You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application identification number (above) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D, IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER



DANCING OUR WAY TO COLLEGE:

A case study of the post-secondary aspirations of Latina folklorico dancers and the role of community based programs as pathways to college

The purpose of this research study is to investigate the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who were involved in a southern California folklorico program. This study also seeks to understand the role that folklorico programs can play in fostering a desire in Latinas to pursue college. Finally, this study will consider opportunities for partnerships between higher education institutions and community-based folklorico programs to develop pathways to college.

To participate in this study you must:

- Be a former participant of Folklorico
- Participated in a program for at least two years during middle school and/or high school
- Identify as Latina
- Between the ages of 18 and 40

To find out more about this study, please contact:

Principal Investigator: Jenna Aguirre
(909) 908-2112
JAFolkStudy@yahoo.com

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS AND QUESTIONS

Dancing Our Way to College –
A case study of the post-secondary aspirations of Latina folklórico dancers
and the role of community based programs as pathways to college.
Interview Protocol

Participants Name:

Date:

Contact Information:

Phone:

Email:

Interviewer:

Participant Pseudonym:

I will follow the following protocol for each interview in this study:

1. Welcome the participant and provide them with the study information flyer.
2. Fill out the contact information sheet.
3. Ask for permission to record the interview and read through the script with them.
4. Ensure that the participant clearly answers whether they agree to participate in the interview and have them sign the consent form.
5. Ask if they have any questions they would like to ask before beginning the interview.
6. Inform the participant that their personal information will remain confidential, and that their interview information will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity.
7. Inform the participant that all responses are voluntary, and if they do not feel comfortable answering any particular question, they can ask to skip it and move on to the next question.
8. Inform the participant that they can choose to remove themselves from the study at any time.
9. When interview is over, I will thank the participant for their time and cooperation.
10. Provide the participant with my contact information in case they have any questions.
11. Inform the participant that I will provide the interview transcript for their review to ensure that I am representing them appropriately.

Dancing Our Way to College –
A case study of the post-secondary aspirations of Latina folklórico dancers
and the role of community-based programs as pathways to college.
Former Dancer Interview

1. Personal
 - a. Tell me a little about yourself...Where did you grow up? Where do you live now? How do you self-identify (Latina, Chicana...)?
 - b. Are you currently employed? What do you do?

2. Folklórico
 - a. How did you become a folklórico dancer? Why do you think your parents placed you in the group?
 - b. How long were you involved in folklórico? Do you remember what ages?
 - c. Tell me about your time in the folklórico...
 - i. Was learning to dance difficult? Fun? Challenging?
 - ii. Tell me about the places you performed and the people you performed with.
 - iii. Tell me about the friendships or relationships you built while in folklórico
 - iv. Do you still communicate with people who participated in or were involved in the folklórico at the same time that you were?
 - v. How did performing make you feel?
 - vi. Can you share with me an example when you felt_____?
 - vii. Tell me about your relationships with the leadership of the folklórico and with other parents in the folklórico?
 - d. When you were a folklórico dancer what were your aspirations for the future? Education? Career? Life in general?

3. K-12 Experiences
 - a. What was middle school and high school like for you?
 - b. Did anyone from school (teachers, counselors, etc.) encourage you to go to college?
 - c. What experiences (if any) prepared you for going to college?
 - d. What were your aspirations for the future when you were in middle school and high school? Education? Career? Life in general?
 - e. Did you have role models during middle school and high school? If so, who were they and why did you consider them a role model?
 - f. Did you attend college right after high school?

4. *If the participant attended college right after high school:*

- a. When did you decide that you wanted to go to college?
 - b. What or who influenced your decision to go to college?
 - c. What college did you attend?
 - d. What skills did you use to get to college?
 - e. How was your transition to college?
 - f. What did you study?
 - g. Did you complete your degree?
 - h. What skills did you use to complete college?
5. *If the participant did not attend college right after high school:*
- a. Did you attend college later in life?
 - i. What made you decide to go to college at that point in your life?
 - ii. What did you study?
 - iii. How was your transition to college?
 - iv. Did you complete your degree?
 - v. What skills did you use to complete college?
 - b. Did you attend vocational school or another type of job training?
 - i. How did you come to this decision?
 - ii. What did you study?
 - iii. What skills did you use to get there?
 - iv. How was your transition to vocational school/job training?
 - v. What skills did you use to complete the program?
6. Folklorico as a Pathway to College
- a. Going back to your middle school and high school experiences, do you think that the skills you developed while being in folklorico helped (or could have helped) in your decision to go to college? If so, which skills and how did they help your decision?
 - b. If you went to college do you think that the skills, you developed while being in folklorico helped you while you were in college? If so, which skills, and how did they help you?
 - c. Can you think of any other activities or efforts in the folklorico program that could have helped you in terms of pursuing or attending college?
7. Folklorico – Development of Community Cultural Wealth
- a. There has been research indicating that folklorico dancers develop various skills as a result of participating in a folklorico program:
 - i. Can you tell me about the skills you developed as a result of being part of a folklorico? Can you share with me an experience where being in folklorico helped you improve either a personal quality or gain a skill that you used outside of the program?
 - ii. Were there people you encountered in folklorico who you considered role models? If so, who? Can you share an example of them being a role model?

- iii. The term “folklórico family” is referred to by many people who participate in folklórico. Does this resonate with you? How so?
- iv. Were there other participants, leaders, or parents you met while in folklórico who were able to assist you in other aspects of your life? If so, how?
- v. Sometimes it can be difficult to find your way around systems or institutions, was there ever a time that someone you encountered while being part of the folklórico was able to help you work your way through the educational, health, legal or other systems in your life? If so, what systems or institutions, and how?
- vi. When you were a dancer, did you ever encounter negativity from audience members or outsiders of the folklórico while at a performance or other activity with the folklórico? If so, can you tell me about it? What happened? How was it resolved? What did you learn from it?

8. Do you have any additional thoughts or information that you would like to share?

9. Do you have any questions for me?

Questionnaire created by Jenna Cortez Aguirre for purposes of this study.

Dancing Our Way to College –
A case study of the post-secondary aspirations of Latina folklórico dancers
and the role of community-based programs as pathways to college.
Parents of Former Dancer Interview

1. Personal
 - a. Tell me a little about yourself...Where did you grow up? Where do you live now? How do you self-identify (Latina, Chicana...)?
 - b. Are you currently employed? What do you do?

2. Folklórico
 - a. How did you hear about this folklórico? Why did you decide to place your daughter in the program?
 - b. How long was your daughter involved in folklórico? Do you remember what ages?
 - c. Tell me about your time in the folklórico...
 - i. Was learning to dance difficult for your daughter? Fun? Challenging?
 - ii. Tell me about the places your daughter performed and the people she performed with.
 - iii. Tell me about the friendships or relationships you built while being a parent in the folklórico.
 - iv. Do you still communicate with people who participated in or were involved in the folklórico at the same time that you and your daughter were?
 - v. When you watched your daughter perform, how did it make you feel?
 - vi. Can you share with me an example when you felt_____?
 - vii. Other than the parent of a dancer, did you take on any other role in the folklórico?
 - d. When your daughter was a folklórico dancer what were her aspirations for the future? Education? Career? Life in general?

3. K-12 Experiences
 - a. What was middle school and high school like for your daughter?
 - b. Did anyone from school (teachers, counselors, etc.) encourage her to go to college, or speak to you about college?
 - c. What experiences (if any) prepared her for going to college?
 - d. What were her aspirations for the future when she was in middle school and high school? Education? Career? Life in general?
 - e. Did your daughter have role models during middle school and high school? If so, who were they and why did she consider them a role model?

- f. Did your daughter attend college right after high school?
4. *If the daughter attended college right after high school:*
 - a. When she you decide that she wanted to go to college?
 - b. What or who influenced her decision to go to college?
 - c. What skills did she use to get to college?
 - d. How was her transition to college?
 - e. Did she complete her degree?
 - f. What skills did she use to complete college?
 5. *If the daughter did not attend college right after high school:*
 - a. Did she attend college later in life?
 - i. What made her decide to go to college at that point in her life?
 - ii. How was her transition to college?
 - iii. Did she complete her degree?
 - iv. What skills did she use to complete college?
 - b. Did she attend vocational school or another type of job training?
 - i. How did she come to this decision?
 - ii. What skills did she use to get there?
 - iii. How was her transition to vocational school/job training?
 - iv. What skills did she use to complete the program?
 6. Folklorico as a Pathway to College
 - a. Going back to your daughter's middle school and high school experiences, do you think that the skills she developed while being in folklorico helped (or could have helped) in her decision to go to college? If so, which skills and how did they help her decision?
 - b. If she went to college, do you think that the skills, she developed while being in folklorico helped her while was in college? If so, which skills, and how did they help her?
 - c. Can you think of any other activities or efforts in the folklorico program that could have helped her in terms of pursuing or attending college?
 7. Folklorico – Development of Community Cultural Wealth
 - a. There has been research indicating that folklorico dancers develop various skills as a result of participating in a folklorico program:
 - i. Can you tell me about the skills you saw your daughter develop as a result of being part of a folklorico? Can you share with me an experience where being in folklorico helped your daughter improve either a personal quality or gain a skill that she used outside of the program?
 - ii. Were there people your daughter encountered in folklorico who you considered role models for your daughter? If so, who? Can you share an example of them being a role model?

- iii. The term “folklórico family” is referred to by many people who participate in folklórico. Does this resonate with you? How so?
- iv. Were there other participants, leaders, or parents you met while in folklórico who were able to assist you or your daughter in other aspects of your lives? If so, how?
- v. Sometimes it can be difficult to find your way around systems or institutions, was there ever a time that someone you encountered while being part of the folklórico was able to help you or your daughter work your way through the educational, health, legal or other systems in your lives? If so, what systems or institutions, and how?
- vi. As the parent of a folklórico dancer, did you or your daughter ever encounter negativity from audience members or outsiders of the folklórico while at a performance or other activity with the folklórico? If so, can you tell me about it? What happened? How was it resolved? What did you and your daughter learn from it?

8. Do you have any additional thoughts or information that you would like to share?

9. Do you have any questions for me?

Questionnaire created by Jenna Cortez Aguirre for purposes of this study.

Dancing Our Way to College –
A case study of the post-secondary aspirations of Latina folklórico dancers
and the role of community-based programs as pathways to college.
Folklórico Leadership Team

This is a two-part interview:

- Part one will consist of a group discussion with all members of the leadership team who are willing to participate. This discussion will consist of information regarding the study, a few general questions, and the opportunity for participants to ask questions.
 - Part two will consist of providing each participant a journal and a list of questions. Each participant is encouraged to take the time to think about and write in the journals responses to each of the questions. Journals will be college two weeks from the day they are provided.
-

Part I – focus group

1. How long have you been involved in the folklórico as part of the leadership team?
2. What is your leadership role in the folklórico, and how did you come to be part of the leadership team?
3. Tell me about the dynamics of the leadership team, is it collaborative, positive?
 - a. Tell me about the folklórico ...
 - i. Do the dances appear to be difficult? Fun? Challenging?
 - ii. Where does the folklórico perform, how are performances decided?
 - iii. How do the dancers interact with each other? How do friendships develop?
 - iv. Do you still communicate with parents or dancers who were a part of the folklórico?
 - v. When you dancers perform, how does it make you feel? Can you share examples?
4. Were you or your children involved in the “college day” event held at the local university after the Dia de los Muertos performance?
5. What are your thoughts on the “college day” event?

Part II - journals

10. Personal
 - a. Tell me a little about yourself...Where did you grow up? Where do you live now? How do you self-identify (Latina/o, Chicana/o...)?
 - b. Are you currently employed? What do you do?
11. Folklórico

- a. How did you hear about this folklórico? Why did you choose this folklórico?
- b. How long have you been involved in the folklórico in total, as a dancer or as a parent?
- c. Have you taken breaks from the folklórico? If so, why? Why did you decide to get involved again?
- d. Is your child still involved in the folklórico?
- e. Have any of the dancers or parents shared their aspirations for the future? Education? Career? Life in general? If not, do you every wonder?

12. Folklórico as a Pathway to College

- a. Tell me about the skills that you have seen dancers develop as they go through the folklórico program?
- b. Do you think that the skills dancers develop while being in folklórico could help the decision to go to college? If so, which skills and how could they help this decision?
- c. What about skills that could help with the transition to college?
- d. Do you think that the skills dancers develop while being in folklórico could help while in college? If so, which skills, and how could they help?
- e. What about skills that could help in the completion of a degree?
- f. Can you think of any other activities or efforts in the folklórico program that could help dancers in terms of pursuing or attending college?
- g. Going back to the “college day” event, do you think expanding on events like this would be helpful in encouraging dancers to pursue or attend college?
- h. As a part of the leadership team, how do you think folklórico could incorporate events such as these to encourage

13. Folklórico – Development of Community Cultural Wealth

- a. There has been research indicating that folklórico dancers develop various skills as a result of participating in a folklórico program:
 - i. Can you tell me about the skills you see dancers develop as a result of being part of a folklórico? Have you seen dancers improve either a personal quality or gain skills that can be used outside of the program?
 - ii. Are there people dancers encounter in folklórico who you would considered role models? If so, who? Can you share an example of them being a role model?
 - iii. The term “folklórico family” is referred to by many people who participate in folklórico. Does this resonate with you? How so?
 - iv. As a leader in the folklórico, have there been times that you were able to help dancers or parents in other aspects of their lives? Have you seen other participants, leaders, or parents in folklórico

who are able to assist dancers or parents in other aspects of their lives? If so, how?

- v. Sometimes it can be difficult to find your way around systems or institutions, was there ever a time when you were able to help a dancer or parent work their way through the educational, health, legal or other systems in your lives? If so, what systems or institutions, and how? Have you seen other participants, leaders, or parents help a dancer or parent work their way through these systems?
- vi. As a leader in this folklórico, have you ever encountered negativity from audience members or outsiders of the folklórico while at a performance or other activity with the folklórico that affected the dancers or parents? If so, can you tell me about it? What happened? How was it resolved? What did each person learn from it?

14. Please provide any additional thoughts or information that you would like to share.

Questionnaire created by Jenna Cortez Aguirre for purposes of this study.

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

For the Case Study: Dancing Our Way to College

Former Dancers (Adults)

Parents of Former Dancers (Adults)

Current Leadership (Adults)

PURPOSE: Within the broader context of the representation of Latinas in higher education, the purpose of this study is to investigate the post-secondary aspirations of Latinas who were involved in a community-based folklórico program. Also, this study seeks to understand the role folklórico programs can play in fostering a desire in Latinas to pursue college. Finally, this study will indicate a need for further research to explore opportunities for partnerships between higher education institutions and community-based folklórico programs to develop pathways to college.

DESCRIPTION: Former dancers and parents of former dancers will be interviewed in person and in a location of their choosing. Interviews will be recorded as they take place. Recordings will be transcribed in writing and used in the final version of this study. Folklórico leadership will be interviewed as a group at a location of their choosing. The interview will be recorded as it takes place. Folklórico leadership will also be given personal journals to write down their thoughts based on questions they will be provided.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions, and you can freely withdraw from participation in this study at any time.

CONFIDENTIAL: Confidentiality will be maintained throughout and after the research process. Audio recordings and hard copies of transcriptions of participant interviews and journals will be stored in a locked filing cabinet throughout the research process. Computer files will be stored on a password protected computer. Audio recordings and computer files will be destroyed three years after the research has been completed. Hard copies will be shredded three years after the research has been completed.

DURATION: Individual interviews with former dancers and former parents will be no longer than 45 minutes. If it appears that interviews will extend longer than 45 minutes, additional interview time will be scheduled. The focus group with leadership will be no longer than 45 minutes.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research. Benefits that may develop are possible pathways to college between the community organization being studied and higher education institutions.

AUDIO: I understand that this research will be audio recorded. Initials____.

CONTACT: For information pertinent to this research study and your rights as a research subject, or in the event of a research related emergency, please contact Dr. Nancy Acevedo-Gil at 909/537-5623 or nacevedo-gil@csusb.edu

RESULTS: Results may be obtained after the completion of this dissertation at <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/>

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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