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*EN SUS PROPIAS PALABRAS: TESTIMONIOS OF LATINAS IN ELECTED AND
APPOINTED OFFICE*

by

ANDREA GUERRERO-GUAJARDO

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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when discussing traumatic events in their childhoods, difficult challenges, or the appalling treatment at the hands of others. I am in awe of the strength that is required for Latinas to face these barriers and overcome them. Nearly all of the women in my study told me that they did not expect to say so much, that they told me things they had never shared with anyone else, or that the interview felt like a therapy session. It was my honor to use this platform to give voice to these experiences and to ensure that the stories remained in their own words, *en sus propias palabras*.

Andrea Guerrero-Guajardo

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my father Pete Guerrero and to my children Benny, Sophia,
Louie, and Giuliana.

EN SUS PROPIAS PALABRAS: TESTIMONIOS OF LATINAS IN ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICE

Andrea Guerrero-Guajardo

University of the Incarnate Word, 2018

Governance in the United States has been the domain of men since the idea of democracy and independence from England was in its infancy. The systematic oppression and exclusion of persons of color and women was the backdrop upon which the United States was founded. Many continue to experience conflict and struggle in their efforts to gain and maintain civil rights and seek personal and professional experiences free from marginalization and oppression. This purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences group of Latinas who have been elected or appointed to public office with an emphasis critical variables of race, ethnicity, immigration story, gender, language, and socioeconomic class as defined by Latino Critical Race Theory and Chicana Feminist Theory.

The study employs *testimonio* as methodology to explore oppressive and marginalizing influences throughout the personal and professional lives of seven Latinas in elected or appointed office. The use of constant comparative, iterative data analysis and *testimonio* methodology give voice to a collective narrative and is intended to act as demonstration of resistance to hegemony in white, male-dominated institutions of government.

The voices of the women in this study tell a cohesive story about the centrality of the family unit in Latino culture with emphasis on *familismo* and *marianismo* and the traditional gender roles of women and girls in Latino families. Furthermore, the testimonios of the women

describe oppression and marginalization suffered in personal and professional settings in the form of racism, sexism, misogyny, and sexual harassment. Despite these barriers, findings revealed that they sought public office in response to a call to public service, social justice, and altruism, especially for vulnerable persons who could not defend themselves from inequity or unfairness.

The testimonios of the seven women in this study tell a story of affection for tradition and love of family. Additionally, the testimonios reveal a shift toward women assuming prominent roles in the household and in the workplace all while navigating oppressive and marginalizing racial, gendered, and cultured experiences. The voices of the Latinas tell the story of how they adhere to dearly held cultural values and a profound fondness for tradition while, at the same time, positioning themselves as confident and capable elected officials.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
GLOSSARY OF TERMS	xiv
CHAPTER 1: LATINOS IN THE UNITED STATES.....	1
Latino Politics	2
Government-Defined Latino Identity	3
Latina Representation in Elected and Appointed Office	8
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Purpose of the Study	11
Research Questions.....	12
Significance of the Study	12
Overview of the Methodology	13
Guiding Theoretical Frameworks	14
Latino Critical Race Theory.....	14
Chicana feminism	15
Chicana feminist epistemology.....	17
Cultural intuition.....	17
Role of the Researcher	18
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	19
Campaigning While Female	19

Table of Contents—Continued

Cultural Values of Marianismo and Familismo.....	23
Intersectionality.....	28
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	32
Testimonio as Qualitative Methodology.....	32
Testimonio and LatCrit.....	38
Research Questions.....	40
Sampling	40
Data Collection	43
Transcription of Audio Recordings	43
Protection of Human Subjects	44
Data Analysis Procedures	45
Data Analysis	48
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	51
Biographical Summaries of Study Participants	53
Racial, Gendered, and Cultural Experiences	55
Familismo and Education	55
Gender Roles and Expectations of Women and Girls	61
Oppression and Marginalization.....	66
Creating Meaning from Racial, Gendered and Cultured Experiences.....	78
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION.....	84
Why I Conducted This Study.....	84

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Discussion of the Findings.....	85
Research question #1	86
Research question #2	87
Research question #3	91
Implications of the Study	93
Creating meaning from testimonios	93
Theoretical implications.....	94
Electoral representation and policy implications.....	96
Methodological Contributions	96
Recommendations for Future Research	97
Summary	98
REFERENCES	103
APPENDICES	114
Appendix A.....	115
Appendix B.....	116
Appendix C	117

LIST OF TABLES

1. Representation of Women and Latinas in Elected in Appointed Office, 2017.....	9
2. Dissertations Employing Testimonio as Methodology.....	39
3. Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants	52

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Method Map.....	34
2. Shift in Focus to Support Use of Testimonio.....	35
3. The Iterative Process of Constant Comparative Data Analysis	50
4. Centrality of Latino Cultural Values and Their Manifestation in Life	87
5. Differences and Oppression.....	91
6. The Illustrated Collective Testimonio of Latinas in Elected and Appointed Office	94

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Appointed: a person who holds a public office after having been assigned or designated by authority or agreement

Elected: a person who holds public office based on voting of constituents

En Sus Propias Palabras: in their own words

Latina: female person of Latin American origin or descent

Latinas: a group consisting of only Latin American women

Latinidad: cultural and social identity shared by Latinos meant to encompass the complex domains associated with the condition of being Latino; transcends nationality or geographic location

Latino: male person of Latin American origin or descent

Latinos: a group consisting of Latin American men; a group consisting of Latin American men and women

Chapter 1: Latinos in the United States

Context of the Study

Governance in the United States has been the domain of men since the idea of democracy and independence from England was in its infancy. The constitution of the United States was written by men to govern the whole of the country. Women did not participate in political debate in person or in the press. No evidence exists of women joining in the public discourse related to the founding of the United States with the exception of Mary Otis Warren who, in 1788, authored a pamphlet opposing the Federalist position of creating a centralized government. Her status as a woman forced her to publish her work under a pseudonym, and she was not appropriately credited until the 1930s (Amar, 1995). At the time of writing of the constitution of the United States, enslaved persons were defined as real estate, or personal property legally annexed to the land belonging to their owner without regard for their humanity or personhood (Copeland, 2010). Persons of color and women were explicitly excluded from participating in government or creating laws meant to govern them. The systematic oppression and exclusion of persons of color and women was the backdrop upon which the United States was founded. Amendments to the founding documents of the country eventually provided for the formal enfranchisement of marginalized groups; however, it does not naturally follow that the hearts and minds of those in power will be changed by well-meaning and just legislation. Conflict and struggle to gain and maintain civil rights remains a central issue in the fabric of American life (Bell, 2004). The passage of the 14th, 15th, and 19th amendments acknowledged persons of color and women as citizens and granted the right to voting and own property (Amar, 1995).

Latinos are persons, male or female, of Latin American origin or descent and have also been marginalized in the United States based on their race, ethnicity, or nationality. *Latinas* is the

feminine form of this word and is used to describe women who are of Latin American origin or descent. Latinos as an identity group was recognized in U.S. politics as early as the 1920s, but became more prominent after the 1975 expansion of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 called for the abolition of English-only election information, including ballots, that functioned to disproportionately disenfranchise Spanish-speaking Latinos (DeSipio, 2006). Despite decades of involvement in American politics, Latinas remain one of the most underrepresented groups racial or ethnic groups in elected or appointed positions (Bejarano, 2013). Journalists have documented anecdotal evidence of describe sexism, misogyny, racism, classism, or an intersection of any of these among women in public service. In this study, I seek to explore the lived experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office. Furthermore, the study will document and theorize their personal and professional experiences as they relate to race, ethnicity, immigration story, gender, language, and socioeconomic class.

Latino Politics

The roots of Latino politics can be traced to the beginnings of Latino immigration and activism. Some Latinos never immigrated to what is now the present-day United States; rather, they were indigenous to what is now known as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Many became American citizens only after the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 that ceded a large parcel of land from Mexico to the United States (Chavez, 1992). Similarly, Spanish, Mexican, Portuguese, Cuban, Puerto Rican, and other Latin American immigration to the United States was as a result of violent conquest, social revolution, freedom from politically manipulated governments, and economic hardship. Some Latinos came to the United States because of the promise of a prosperous life, while others fled civil unrest and the certainty of rape, torture, or murder in their homelands. Because of these circumstances, Latinos

were not unfamiliar to the struggle for civil rights, property rights, educational inequality, land disputes, and party-based political activity that they faced when they arrived in the United States because it was often the case in their homelands (Affigne, 2000; Schmidt, Barvosa-Carter, & Torres, 2000). Latino immigrants in the United States tended to become naturalized citizens and attempted to assimilate to the social and political system in the United States (Chavez, 1992). Many registered to vote, began to exercise political influence, and have been recognized as an important voting bloc (Bejarano, 2013). Even as Latinos began to weave themselves as a singular group into the fabric of American society, many were reluctant to forget their shared history of oppression and struggle within their unique national identities and the significant differences related to nation of origin, race, class, gender, and even race (Affigne, 2000).

Government-Defined Latino Identity

U.S. Census 1790-2010. The terms Latino and Hispanic are employed interchangeably throughout academic literature and refer to a heterogeneous group of ethno-racial populations including Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Central American persons; these represent the three largest Hispanic subgroups in the United States and make up 80% of all Latin American women in the United States (Gándara, 2015). Latinos acknowledge heterogeneity based on country of origin, but the group is often seen as a homogeneous group in the United States. The evolution of Latino identity in the context of the American ethno-racial construct is reflected in the development of the U.S. Census process over the last several decades. The Immigration Act of 1917 and the establishment of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924 marked the first formal regulation of Mexican immigration. The Immigration Act of 1917 greatly expanded the list of prohibited undesirable immigrants and explicitly banned illiterate persons older than 16 years of age, and

provided for the creation of a temporary waiver program intended to recruit Mexican agricultural and railroad workers who would be otherwise prohibited from immigrating.

Prior to 1930, persons of Latino or Hispanic ancestry were not counted as a separate category and were categorized as “White.” Rather, their categorization varied greatly over time (Humes & Hogan, 2009). During the 1930 census, the category of “Mexican” was added and coincided with the implementation of the Mexican Repatriation movement. This effort was intended to decrease competition for U.S. jobs after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 that ultimately led to the Great Depression. Union and industry representatives exerted significant pressure on the federal government and were joined by those who had racially motivated hatred for Mexicans and persons of Latino descent. It is estimated that approximately 500,000 persons were deported from the United States including about 250,000 American citizens as defined by the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution (Gratton & Merchant, 2013).

From 1940-1960, descriptive terms for Latinos were again excluded from census surveys, and Latinos were categorized as “White.” Prior to the 1960s, no formal conceptualization of a Latino person existed. In the 1970 census, the term Hispanic was added with subcategories to capture persons who identified as Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban; these three nationalities made up the majority of Hispanic persons in the United States at the time. Further evolution of Latino identity in the United States Census came in in 1980 with the addition of “Mex-Amer” and “Chicano,” and again in 1990 that included a line for persons to write in their own nationalities. The term Latino was first introduced in the U.S. Census in 2000, and finally in 2010, the census stated the Hispanic and Latino are not considered a race as defined by the Office of Budget Management and Classification but continued to collect information from survey respondents about their country of origin (Pratt, Hixson, & Jones, 2015).

The evolution of this nomenclature is especially relevant because one of the explicit purposes of the decennial census conducted in the United States is to inform the federal government about the number and composition of the population, and these data also provide the basis for funding decisions related to social programs, housing and urban development, parks and recreation projects, and other programs administered by the federal government (Riche, 1999). Ambiguous categorization in the census could have had the potential consequence of neglecting the specific needs of heavily Latino communities during those years as well as implications for redistricting congressional and state legislative boundaries (Peralta & Larkin, 2011).

Supreme Court Decision. An example of the struggle of the U.S. government to define the ethno-racial group can be found in the landmark case of *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954). The case was argued before the Supreme Court of the United States in 1954 marked the first time that Mexican-American lawyers appeared before the court and, more importantly, established that Mexican-Americans and persons of any nationality were entitled to equal protection of the 14th Amendment. The ruling required that Pedro Hernandez, who had been charged with murder, should be tried by a jury of his peers that had been assembled without discrimination. As the Supreme Court held, Mexican-Americans had been systematically excluded from juries based upon race and/or ethnicity, and cited the fact that no Mexican-American or any person with a Latino surname had ever served on a jury for at least the 25 years previous. These facts deprived Hernandez of a fair trial by a jury of his peers. As it relates to the development of the categorization of Latino in U.S. history, it is important to note that even the highest court in the United States stated in its opinion that it could not conceptualize what it meant to be a Mexican-American, and rejected the notion that the discrimination that occurred was based on race

because Mexican-Americans did not fit the definition of race defined by a white/black dichotomy (Haney-Lopez, 1997); during the proceedings, the Court asked, “Can Mexican-Americans speak English? Are they citizens?” (Sandoval & Miller, 2009). The Supreme Court established that discrimination occurred based on differences from the normative binary standard of the community (i.e., White and Black). These other differences included negative and derogatory opinions and actions toward Mexican-American, enforced segregation of schools, and the presence of Jim Crow-style laws targeting Mexican-Americans in restaurants and bathroom facilities (Haney-Lopez, 1997). Subsequent to this case, the civil rights movements of the 1960s and the 1970s further defined Latinos as a separate group, and the advent of affirmative action programs created the need to distinguish Latinos and Hispanic persons from Black persons when competing for jobs, admission to colleges, and other programs awarded by race or ethnicity (Chavez, 1992). This timing of the case further contextualizes the manner in which Latinos struggled to differentiate racial oppression that is particular to their identity. *Hernandez v. Texas* (1954) was argued in the Supreme court only 15 days prior to another landmark case: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The Brown case famously overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that legalized official separate but equal segregation in state-sponsored public schools. At essentially the same moment that Latinos were afforded the right to a jury of their peers, black and white children schools were legally integrated.

Culturally-defined Latinidad. While the U.S. Census categories are prescribed by a governmental entity and refer exclusively to the country of origin, the evolution of these terms in social and political circumstances is much more nuanced. In academic literature, many authors employ varying definitions for the terms Latino or Hispanic. Corlett (2011) relies on a genealogical perspective to define the concept of *Latino-ness* or *Latinidad*. Specifically,

Latinidad is the ability of a person to trace her biological ancestors to a Latino ethnic group. In addition, the extent to which she retains the primary use of the Spanish language, possesses a Spanish surname, or lives and participates in Spanish cultural tradition all impact the tendency to identify as Latina. None of these is required to be categorized within the ethnicity but provides an opportunity to explore the differences among all Latinas (Corlett, 2011). For the purposes of this study, I choose to define Latino as a person who was born in a Latin American country or the descendant of persons born in a Latin American country. Latin American countries, as a general term, describes 19 sovereign states in the Western Hemisphere extending from Mexico to the southernmost tip of the South American continent. Additionally, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are all considered to be part of Latin America.

The term Latino was first used in a political and economic context in the 1800s by Columbian and Chilean writers in response to colonialism and was assigned to an indigenous perspective. The result was a word that represented the symbolic unification of countries that had been previously occupied by France, Spain, and Portugal and that distanced these countries from the United States despite geographic proximity. By 1899, the term was widely accepted to include all of the Spanish-speaking countries and Brazil. Fiscal and political alliances continued to influence the use of the term well into the 1900s. Whether a person is influenced by the empirical definition used by the federal government or the definition that emerged as a result of social, political, economic, or historical contexts, the decision to self-identify as Latina, Latino, Hispanic, or Chicana is often a deeply personal choice (Wallerstein, 2005.) Many labels indicative of this ethnicity are available in the U.S. Census and peer-reviewed literature; in this study, I choose to employ the term Latino for two reasons. Firstly, it is widely used in literature as an inclusive term that acknowledges persons of diverse Latin American backgrounds and

lends itself to a collective consciousness of shared culture even for persons of varied nationalities. Conversely, the label Hispanic is a term imposed upon a conquered people by Spanish colonizing influence. It represents the eradication of indigenous identity; its use would be incongruent to purpose of this study by potentially perpetuating oppressive language for the study participants (Martínez, 1995).

Latina Representation in Elected and Appointed Office

Minority representation and civic participation in the political process can positively influence public policy that could improve income and educational outcomes (Garcia, 1986) for Latinas in the United States; however, political representation also lags. Of the 50 million Latinos in the United States in 2014, approximately 50% were female. Historically, of the 12,000 people who have ever served in the U.S. Congress, only 11 (.09%) have been Latina.

Current representation as of the November 2016 U.S. elections do not indicate a significant shift toward parity. Available data for the 8,236 total seats in state and federal elected and appointed office, only 109 (1.3%) are held by a Latina. This number includes 7,383 state senators and state representative seats, of which 1,789 (24.2%) are held by women and 97 (1.3%) are held by Latinas. Three hundred eighteen statewide executive seats exist and include the offices of governor, lieutenant governor, attorneys general, and secretaries of state. Of these, 74 (23.2%) are women and three (.09%) are Latinas. In total, 37 women have served as governor of a state, and only one of these women was Latina. She is the current Governor of New Mexico, Susana Martinez, elected in 2011. In 2016, the first Latina, Catherine Cortez Masto, was elected to the U.S. Senate representing the State of Nevada. Political representation of women has increased in recent years, but at the current rate, women will reach parity in about two hundred years. Parity among Latinas will take significantly longer (Latinas Represent Fact Sheet, 2014).

Table 1

Representation of Women and Latinas in Elected in Appointed Office, 2017

Body of Government	Total	Total Women	% of Total	Total Latina	% of Total
All Congress (1789-2017)	12000	313	.02	11	.09
Federal Executive (Cabinet and Cabinet Level)	15	5	.33	0	0
Supreme Court	10	3	30	1	10
U.S. House of Representatives	435	83	19	9	2
U.S. Senate	100	21	21	1	1
State Legislators	7383	1830	25	97	1.3
Statewide Executives	312	74	24	3	1.0

Note. Data for representation of women and Latinas from the Center for American Women and Politics (2017).

Women in government is a recent development relative to the founding of the United States and not one that was intended at its creation. Latinos are a growing population and emerging identity in the United States. Latinas are located at the intersection of these two identities, and focus on Latina leadership has increased in recent years. With more than 25 million Latinas currently in the United States, this group constitutes 20 % of the total female population of the United States. In addition, that number is expected to grow to at least 30% by the year 2060. For this reason, Latinas are expected to have a significant impact on American culture, business, and politics (Gándara, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Access to governance and elected positions has important implications for the creation of legislation and public policy. The presence of women in government has increased in recent decades but, based on the number of women living in the United States, do not occupy an equitable number of elected seats at various levels of government. Women make up 50.8% of the total population of the United States (U.S. Census, 2010), but they only make up 24% of all elected and appointed offices at the State and Federal level. In comparison, Latinas hold just 1.3% of State and Federal offices and comprise nearly 8 percent of the total U.S. population. In contrast, Black women occupy 3.6% of all State and Federal offices, nearly three times as many as Latinas, while only comprising a smaller proportion of the total population of the United States (7%) (Center for American Women and Politics, 2017). These data illuminate the lack of parity for Latina elected and appointed officials and the significant underrepresentation of Latinas in elected and appointed office especially within the larger context of projected growth of Latinas in the United States. The research problems will explore the lived experience of Latinas who have achieved elected or appointed office and expand the limited published literature about the experiences of Latinas in public office.

Legislative bodies at the state and federal level, as well as other governmental agencies, are directed by strict rules of decorum and etiquette; however, anecdotal evidence points to racial, gender, and cultured oppression and marginalization within these institutions. Solomos and Back (1994) point out the pervasiveness of different forms of racism in the field of education research, but a gap that addresses this issue exists in the literature related to women in public service. While traditional racism is overt and intentionally targeted, a new form of racism, cloaked in subtlety, affects Latinas even in hallowed institutions of government (Baer &

Hartmann, 2013). Examination of the lives of Latinas who have experienced oppression and marginalization provide rich understanding of the realities faced by constituents who are governed by the law (Hess & Sobre-Denton, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

This purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences group of Latinas who have been elected or appointed to public office with an emphasis critical variables defined by Latino Critical Race Theory. I seek to understand “what difference her difference made.” (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p. 376). I propose the use of *testimonio* as a methodology to give voice to women that will not or cannot tell their own stories for fear of professional jeopardy or political retribution.

Furthermore, the study will investigate critical variables, if any, that affect their choices, opportunities, or their own perceptions of lived journeys. This research will bring meaning and understanding to the life journeys of participants through the lenses of Latino Critical Race Theory and Chicana Feminist Theory by soliciting descriptions of successes, challenges and barriers experienced as they ascended to elected office with a particular emphasis on those that reflect female archetypes of *La Virgen* and *La Malinche* within Latina identity as defined by Chicana feminism. In light of the changing face of the United States, the perspectives of these Latinas provide insight into the social environment of the political and legislative process and how it is experienced by Latinas.

Research Questions

This qualitative study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the racial, gendered, and cultured experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office at the state and federal levels, if any?

2. What do testimonios of Latinas reveal about oppression and marginalization, if any?
3. How do Latinas create meaning from racial, gendered, and cultured experiences while in elected or appointed office?

Significance of the Study

Lack of parity and proportional representation among Latinas in the United States uniquely positions these women in a white, male-dominated professional space. Informed by This qualitative study seeks to explore if oppression is manifested in the personal and professional lived experiences of Latinas who have been elected or appointed to state or federal elected or appointed offices. The study seeks theorize the experiences of Latina elected and appointed officials and contribute to the testimonio literature among Latinos in this public sector. First, the study proposes to amplify the voices of Latinas who have experienced racial, ethnic, and gender bias in their personal lives as a result of their public visibility or in the course of their work in public office. Latinas, individually and as an identity group, have suffered the effects of discrimination throughout history even as they have made small in-roads into systems of power controlled by dominant groups (Bejarano, 2013).

The testimonios of this group of Latinas has the potential to add to the understanding of Latina identity as they navigate public life. The methodology is intended to give voice to the journey and assist other Latinas as they begin to explore the political and electoral process. Much of the existing literature related to Latinas in public office examines underrepresentation of them as an identity group and the effectiveness of political strategies for successful campaigning with little mention of the critical variables that make up the complex identities of women of color in an Anglo and male dominated field. The stories of women in politics, and especially women of color, should be told from their own perspectives to avoid silencing, excluding, or delegitimizing

their voices and identities (Briscoe, 2005). This study has the potential to shed light on oppression and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender that has not been previously articulated or about Latinas in government.

Given the data that highlights the underrepresentation of Latinas in elected office and the lack of a focus on political science in LatCrit theoretical development, this study addresses a gap in the literature that qualitatively explores the life and leadership trajectories of Latinas and the circumstances that facilitated such extra-ordinary career paths (Ledesma, Calderon & Parker, 2015).

Overview of the Methodology

This study proposes the use of the testimonio methodology design guided by Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and Chicana Feminist Theory to address the research questions because of the need to explore oppressive and marginalizing influences throughout the personal and professional lives of Latinas in elected office. Huber (2012) defined testimonio as a methodology as “a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more human present and future” (p. 378). Moreover, testimonio acknowledges and solicits private feelings, emotions, and events as they relate to the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender (Huber, 2009; Huber, 2010). I have chosen to employ this methodology as a means of resistance to hegemony enshrined in white, male-dominated institutions of government and to add to the expanding testimonial literature.

Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

Latino Critical Race Theory. Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) was developed for and has been employed extensively in the fields of legal studies, and more recently, education

since the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. The first LatCrit Colloquium was held in 1996 to facilitate a discourse on the how scholars interpret the Latino Identity in the context of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and to support the community of scholars committed to social justice research in education. The proceedings describe the first conversations related to the development of LatCrit, and subsequent symposia have advanced the theoretical discourse about LatCrit significantly (Published Proceedings, 1996).

LatCrit can be compared to CRT in that both have been used to examine how laws, the legal system, and public policy continue to support a white supremacist societal order and the subjugation of people of color (Crenshaw et al., 1995). LatCrit has been traditionally accepted as a conceptual framework similar to CRT for guiding ethnic studies, women's studies, sociology, history, law, and education (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) but diverges from CRT in that in that LatCrit also considers other domains of identity including language, immigration, culture, and sexual orientation (Bernal, 2002); Furthermore, LatCrit has been used as a foundational framework for designing methodologies and informing data collection and analysis in Latino education research since the late 1990s (Huber, 2008); however, based on the body of literature related to CRT and LatCrit, few to none have ever explored the lived experiences of women public service. This study seeks to address the lack of literature related to LatCrit and the lived experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office.

Justification for the use of LatCrit in these aforementioned fields is rooted in the assumption that Latinas experience institutions of power differently based on race, gender, class, language, culture, and immigration status. Within these power structures, Latinos experience significant hardships and lack privilege (Huber, 2009). As of November 2017, more than 12,000 persons have served in the Congress of the United States, and 11 of those were Latinas (Latinas

Represent Fact Sheet, 2014), yet no significant part of the literature attempts to document or theorize the oral histories of these Latinas or their journeys to these positions. The focus of this study is a group of Latinas who have achieved success that eludes the majority of persons regardless of gender and ethnicity. Elected or appointed officials in state and federal government in the United States are people who are generally considered to be of an elite status who possess power and privilege. Latinas who have acquired a level of education or influence necessary to execute a successful campaign, ascend to elected or appointed office, and enter public life could be viewed as immune to these barriers, challenges, marginalization or oppression as faced by Latina populations studied in other fields; however, this study will seek understanding of expand the use of LatCrit and theorize the lived experiences of Latinas in public service.

Chicana feminism. In addition to LatCrit as a guiding theoretical framework, I also propose the conceptual framework of Chicana feminism to explore the intersections of critical variables such as race, class, gender, language, culture, and immigration and Chicana feminist principles. The Chicano Liberation movement of 1965-1970 sought to create equity and challenge white supremacy toward a goal of social, economic, and political liberation for Latinos. At the same time, Latinas expressed their own feminist agenda, but informed by their Latina identity instead of feminism shaped by White, middle class identity, and were criticized on two fronts. Their denunciation of sexism and oppression by male-dominated action and thought was seen as traitorous to their Latino culture i.e., defiance of male superiority or patriarchy in Latino families. Additionally, White women criticized early Chicana feminists for being too divisive to the feminist movement by distracting from sexism with their simultaneous and intersectional consideration of racism (Martínez, 1995).

Chicana Feminist thought is typified by the notion of, triple oppression, or the suggestion that women of color, and specifically Latinas, experience oppression at the intersection of racism, imperialism (colonization), and sexism. Whereas men of color are oppressed by racism and imperialism and White women are oppressed by sexism, Latinas suffer from all three forms of oppression (McCann & Kim, 2010). Feminist theory as a stand-alone recognizes the specific conditions of women on a global and generational scale and is juxtaposed by the specific conditions of men. Chicana feminism acknowledges the simultaneous struggle of Latino men against racism and colonization while also considering their own unique struggle against sexism. This form of Latina feminism is differentiated by the need to separate itself because of its attention to race and class not found in traditional feminist thought (García, 1997). Chicana feminism guides the development of the interview protocol and provides a frame for data analysis in order to address differences faced by Latinas based on the intersection of race and gender.

Chicana feminist epistemology. Latinas possess unique and particular ways of knowing that are shaped by their experiences in academia and professional settings, as well as by the cultural, racial and gendered experience of being a woman in a Latino family, environment, or context. In order to further acknowledge my own role as an instrument of research (Symonette, 2009), I situate this study within a Chicana Feminist Epistemology (Huber, 2009) to acknowledging that the lives of Latinas are different than those of men or women of other ethno-racial groups. I employ the method of testimonio to collect and analyze qualitative data, and this methodology is deeply rooted in Latino traditions of research; however, Bernal (2002) advocates for highlighting the role of the researcher and her epistemology in order to challenge mainstream and male Latino scholars. Harding (1987) defines epistemology as the nature, status, and

production of knowledge.” Bernal (1998) argues that Chicana Epistemology should be concerned with creating knowledge about the lives of Latinas and upon whose authority the knowledge is accepted as valid and legitimate. It is the Latina claiming the authority to speak for herself. In positioning this study within a Chicana Feminist Epistemology, I am acknowledging the legitimacy of my own knowledge and experience as a Latina and that of the study participants.

Cultural intuition. While a Chicana Feminist Epistemology asserts that the social and cultural history of Latinos is relevant to the design, implementation, analysis, and interpretation of research, the integration of cultural intuition is equally significant. Bernal (1998) points to four sources of cultural intuition uniquely present in Latina researchers: personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and the analytical research process. Expanding on the concept of theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), cultural intuition also includes the concepts of collective experience and community memory. My intentional location within this epistemology informs both the methodology of testimonio and the LatCrit lens.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative methodology often includes the description of the researcher as the instrument of inquiry and whose biases must be identified and acknowledged to ensure valid and reliable findings (Maxwell, 2012; Skukauskaite & Green, 2011). In this study, my role as the researcher is to design the study, develop interview questions, and collect and analyze data. Additionally, I am responsible for listening carefully to the women in my study and their stories and remaining respectful of the individual perspectives of the participants. I am a multi-racial woman with Mexican, Indigenous, and Anglo-European ancestry. I self-identify as a Native (or Indigenous) Tejana or Latina. As such, I have awareness about the multi-dimensional and

complex nature of ethno-racial culture. I have also completed an undergraduate degree, a graduate degree, and am currently a doctoral candidate. I have participated in leadership development programs whose purpose is to advance the skill set of emerging Latino leaders and to increase the number and influence of Latinas in elected and appointed office. These experiences have helped to create my point-of-view about the American electoral and political process and about the cultural influences of Latinas who aspire to elected office. I have worked on municipal, state, and national campaigns as well as issue-based referendum campaigns. I am personally and professionally acquainted with Latinas who have been elected and appointed to public office. Careful reflection about my own experiences, and appropriate bracketing of these biases, protects the perspectives of the participants and not allow my own to prejudice the interview process, data collection, or analysis.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In order to effectively present sets of readings (Delamont, 2016) that serve to construct a conceptual framework that describes the study population within the contexts of the proposed guiding theories and methodology, I have included work from leadership studies, political science, Chicana feminist literature, critical race literature, education, social justice, and political gender studies. My search terms included Latina, Latino, Hispanic, Mexican, LatCrit, Latino Critical Race Theory, Critical Race Theory, leadership, race, gender, politics, political science, and women, either alone or in combination with each other in order to identify and curate relevant literature for each set of readings. In addition, I have included readings known to me by virtue of my personal interest in Latino history and Latina identity. Finally, as I progressed through my dissertation journey, I often discussed my dissertation topic with friends, colleagues, mentors, and professors who recommended relevant books and literature that could inform this literature review. In this chapter, I present a current and historical review of women in public service as well as social and cultural influences of Latina identity described by Chicana feminist writings. Finally, this review contextualizes Latinas and leadership within the theoretical framework Latino Critical Race Theory to provide an analytical, critical, and empirical foundation for understanding the lived experiences of Latina in elected and appointed office.

Campaigning While Female

In 2013, The Institute for Women's Policy Research, in partnership with Hunt Alternatives Fund, conducted a comprehensive study that included 45 personal interviews of female candidates for elected office in the United States. In addition, the study included data from focus groups that consisted of female elected officials and congressional staffers to investigate the circumstances that motivate a woman to run for office and how they are able to

cultivate political careers and nurture ambition for higher levels of office. While this study did not focus on ethnicity, it highlights three significant barriers to public office related to candidate gender: (a) raising money, (b) lack of mentoring, and (c) social dimensions of campaigning while female.

Fundraising is essential to any bid for public office at any level, but female candidates are reluctant and uncomfortable asking supporters for campaign contributions. In addition, women have greater difficulty fostering relationships with those who would become donors when asked. Lastly, networks of dependable donors constructed by political parties and women's organizations are not often accessible by the average female candidate (Baer & Hartmann, 2013).

Another element that influences the success of female candidacy is the presence of a strong mentoring relationship. Often, political parties or other politically influential networks of people recruit, develop, and nominate men for elected office. More than 50 percent (51.4%) of the interviewees for the Women's Policy Research study reported not having been recruited or encouraged to run for office and most report self-nomination as their introduction to public service. Additionally, when women do become candidates, their mentors or "kitchen cabinet members" are traditionally female elected officials or men who are not connected to the party elite. This structure does not facilitate advancement to the highest levels. Rather, it tends to move female candidates laterally throughout government without progression to higher office.

Women who participated in the study also reported experiencing gender-specific stressors including sexist comments and actions from male and female peers, donors, professional contacts, and the media. Baer and Hartmann (2013) describe this phenomenon as "campaigning while female" and refers to the inordinate attention paid to dress, hair, and the traditional role of wife and/or mother. Participants cite blatant sexual harassment from men as significant issue,

according to the participants. The authors are also careful to delineate “campaigning while female” from discrimination. Seventy-five percent of the study participants report discrimination and refer to inequity of donations, support, and resources when compared to male candidates of similar stature in the political environment. In cases of discrimination, women report limited access to fundraising opportunities, limited access to public speaking engagements, or the inability to schedule necessary meetings. One of the extreme examples of discrimination occurred when female candidates were actively and aggressively discouraged from running (Baer & Hartmann, 2013).

Others (Carroll & Sanbonmatsu, 2013; Stanwick & Kleeman, 1983; Stanwick, 1983) point out that women possess advantages in the electoral process, especially when her opponent is a man. For example, she gains greater visibility because of the rarity of a female candidate. Her candidacy may appeal to a sense of justice from voters who view her status as a woman marginalizing. Finally, her campaign could motivate unlikely voters to participate in an election where they feel their gender could benefit by the election of a woman (Darcy & Schramm, 1977). This sentiment is echoed by Schmidt et al., (2000) who point out that dimensions of culture that are shared by a Latino candidate and the Latino community creates a feeling of camaraderie that translates into political support especially where system of power suggest that the status quo of Anglo systems of power will persist. Rule (1994) agrees and cites Lijphart (1991) who expressed concern for the democratic process in the United States and abroad where few women participate as elected officials because women in elected leadership positions advocate for the passage of laws that positively affect women, children, and other marginalized groups.

In 2012, Lake and Carpenter, conducted a similar study using email surveys of female state legislators to explore reasons that would influence a woman's decision to run for higher office. The survey solicited responses that would indicate why she would choose to not pursue elected office. Both the Baer and Hartmann study (2013) and the Lake Research Partners (2012) studies were funded by Hunt Alternatives and included qualitative research contributions from Baer, Hartman, and Gault. The survey was collected from 176 female state legislators and an additional 171 online interviews were conducted among female legislators; five follow-up phone interviews were conducted. Key findings of this survey include exploration of factors that prompted the women to seek higher office and barriers that might have impeded them in their pursuit. Motivating factors included, among others, the presence of a mentor and support of their political parties. Other studies cite barriers to running, such as difficulties with fundraising and a lack of confidence in their qualifications to hold the office (Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, & Walsh, 2009). Finally, the survey sought to discover any elements that would drive change within the political process (Political Parity, 2014).

Using these data from Baer and Hartmann (2013) and Lake and Carpenter (2012), Political Parity, a bipartisan non-profit advocacy group focused on increasing the scope and influence of women in elected office, created the publication, "Shifting Gears: How Women Navigate the Road to Higher Office" (2013). This document outlines a "how-to" handbook for deciding to run for office, campaigning, and how to deploy long-term strategies for a successful political career. The two studies provide the foundation for Political Parity to provide tools for the female candidate while warning her of potential pitfalls experiences by other women already elected to office (Political Parity, 2014).

The literature related to barrier, challenges, and factors that motivate women to run for office informs my study and the research design. Much of the literature related to why women run is survey-based and focuses on campaigning. My study seeks to address the gap in the literature that addresses personal lives and lived experiences.

Cultural Values of Marianismo and Familismo

Marianismo is the Latino gender socialization construct that defines expectations for female behavior in Latino culture and within a Latino family. Marianismo is deeply ingrained in the collective conscious of men and women in Latino culture and represents what it means to fulfill the duties of woman, wife, mother, daughter, sister, etc. As an introduction to marianismo, Anzaldúa (1987) discusses the concept of Cultural Tyranny that limits the roles of women and obligates them to submit to patriarchy and abuse. This tyranny is conveyed culturally and often perpetuated by mothers and grandmothers who suffer under the same dominant paradigms, yet impose them on subsequent generations. Cultural Tyranny defines only a few paths for a woman to follow in life. She can enter religious life as a nun; she could become corrupted and live as a prostitute or an unwholesome woman, or remain in the home as a mother and/or a housewife. In recent decades, it has become acceptable for women to enter the workforce in order to care and provide for her family. Still, the expectation of maintaining a household with multiple children is maintained. The woman who rejects motherhood is ostracized and ridiculed for failing to live up to the cultural standard. Women who enter religious life and take vows of chastity, poverty, and purity exempt themselves from this obligation and are held in high regard for forsaking motherhood in favor of a life in service to God. Women find themselves *entrefronteras*, or between borders, when trying to navigate a space that is typified by marginalization based on their gender, class, and ethnicity (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 39). Arredondo (2002) expands this

assertion with her “Santa y Marquesa” thesis in which she describes the struggle of Latinas to adhere to a model of saintly, Godly behavior accompanied by noble and regal qualities. She provides the example of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. Sor Juana, a nun from a noble family, was revered for her piety and her influence on Mexican literature. In spite of restrictions on women attending university, even noble women, she obtained an education and the importance of her work was compared the Magna Carta for its support of intellectual freedom for women. She did this in a time when resistance against misogyny and gender oppression was nearly non-existent.

These stereotypes have been perpetuated throughout history and are considered to be guiding principles for Latina social identity development. Even as Latinas acknowledge significant contributions of indigenous women before Spanish colonization and various military conflicts in Mexico, and even as Latinas are encouraged to enter the workforce and advocates for gender equity, they are still expected to adhere to “traditional ways” related to the role of women in the family and to the concept of the good/bad woman dichotomy (Cotera, 1977). The stereotypes are represented in the archetypal characters of La Virgen and La Malinche and discussed throughout the seminal essays in the early development of Chicana feminism (García, 1997).

The feminine attributes of purity, maternity, and chastity some of one of the most highly desired qualities of a prototypically ideal Latina. The expectation that women aspire to these attributes or give the appearance of possessing these attributes even as they fulfill their roles of wives and mothers is known as marianismo (Piña-Watson, Castillo, Jung, Ojeda, & Castillo-Reyes, 2014). These qualities are typified by the iconic representation and near universal adulation of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe in Latino culture. The development of the Virgen de Guadalupe story in Catholicism and her use as the symbol of motherhood in Latino culture

begins in the early 1500's as Spanish colonialism dismantled the Aztec empire. Early Aztec goddess of fertility and earth, Coatlicue, was represented in the female form and possessing serpentine characteristics and taloned feet. As a deity, Coatlicue manifested in three different aspects: Tlazolteotl and Cihuacoatl which possessed qualities of darkness, and Tonantsi who possessed only qualities of light (good). At that time, Coatlicue, a multifaceted and influential deity, was viewed as a threat to male deities in the male dominated culture of the Aztecs. As a solution, males Aztecs undermined respect and cultural significance of the dark aspects of Coatlicue and left only Tonantsi as a revered figure in Aztec culture. Thereafter, Tonantsi was viewed as the "good mother" and was responsible for successful agriculture and good health. As Spanish colonialism and Catholicism vacated the earlier pagan belief system of the indigenous peoples, this mythology served as the foundation for the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe and Juan Diego flourished and is representative of Spanish colonial efforts to pacify newly converted Catholics and to win the conversion of indigenous people who had not yet converted. The story also served to further reinforce the concept of purity, chastity, and maternity among women (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Conversely, the opposite characteristics can be found in the representation of La Malinche, also known as *La Malintzin* or *La Chingada*. She is the woman who is believed to have betrayed her people for self-preservation and survival by shunning chastity and purity and aligning herself with Spanish colonizers in her homeland. La Malinche was a dark-skinned, indigenous woman who, according to historical accounts, was bilingual and bicultural. Sold into intertribal slavery by her mother, La Malinche was fluent in her native Nahuatl language and in the languages and cultural practices of those who enslaved her. Her intelligence and political savvy eventually caught the attention of her captors, Aztec leaders, who used her as human

capital. She was deployed as a tool to negotiate with other tribes and eventually the Spanish. She was given to Hernan Cortes as a gift and functioned as an emissary for both the Aztecs and the Spanish. Because of the assistance that she gave to the Spanish and the eventual fall of the Aztec empire, she is viewed in Latino culture as a traitorous woman who betrayed her people for personal gain. As she found herself *entrefronteras*, she was presented with the impossible choice of remaining loyal to her indigenous people or to the Spanish to whom she was enslaved. For these reasons, her name has become synonymous with prostitute, whore, and a woman who rejects her own people and their beliefs (Anzaldúa, 1987).

The Virgin Mary of Guadalupe and La Malinche, represent two opposing representations of women in Latino culture. La Virgen is the epitome of blessed martyrdom, motherhood, and saintliness while La Malinche exemplifies shame, corruption, and desecration. These two prototypical icons are helpful to understand how Latinas experience their ethnicity and gender in the context of a male dominated spaces like public office and, indeed, within their own families and households (Arredondo, 2002).

In Chapter 1, I highlight the heterogeneity of Latino populations with respect to country of origin, language, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment. Despite these differences, Latinos from dissimilar origins possess similar family values characterized by an interdependent collectivist orientation complemented by a hierarchical family structure called familismo. Familismo is defined as the “(a) perceived obligation to provide material and emotional support to the members of the extended family; (b) reliance on relatives for support; and (c) the perception of relatives as the behavioral and attitudinal referents” (Marin & Marin, 1991). Others cite the tendency of Latino families to depend on members of the immediate and extended family members and who feel an intensely intimate sense of belonging and cohesiveness to the family

unit; members of the family unit include aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents. Financial and life decisions are often made with input from many members of the family. Younger parents in the family often defer to and seek advice on child-rearing from older members of the family (Comas-Diaz, 1997). Adherence to the concept of familismo promotes solidarity within the family to achieve the best outcome for the whole unit (Marin & Marin, 1991). Familismo is manifested in the observance of traditions and are often associated with Catholic religious rituals or rites. For example, it is the usual practice for extended Latino families to attend Sunday mass as a group and then gather for a weekly meal. Other religious sacraments that include a heavy emphasis on family involvement include Baptism, Quincenera (a girl's 15th birthday celebration), and Matrimony. Each of these events includes a provision for friends and family members to serve as *padrinos*, also known as godparents or sponsors whose role is to provide financial support for the event or emotional support for the young girl by physically standing next to her during Mass. Padrinos become symbolic co-parents for their lifetimes, and therefore are able to exert even greater influence within the family structure (Falicov, 1998).

In order to support the familismo structure, the personal characteristics of sympathy (*simpatia*) should be cultivated and nurtured within the individuals in the family. From a young age, both boys and girls are taught the importance of showing respect (*respeto*) to one's elders and authority figures and to always represent oneself with dignity (*dignidad*) and grace (*gracia*). To fall short of these personal values, especially in a public venue, would bring shame to the individual and expose the family to ridicule and loss of reputation in the community (Marin & Marin, 1991).

Intersectionality

Before Kimberlé Crenshaw famously coined the term “intersectionality” in 1989, bell hooks (1981) explored the contradictions about women and identity in feminist writings in her book, *“Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism,”* which is critical of the feminist tendency to muse about the social circumstances faced by women and the social circumstances faced by Black persons without acknowledging that some women could be Black and some Black persons could be women. This critique by hooks was the nascent idea of how multiple identities, and corresponding forms of oppression, interact to create a unique set of social circumstances in the lives of women (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Intersectionality, as a theory, was first described within the context of Critical Race Theory to give voice to the interaction of race, ethnicity, gender and class in the lives of Black women. Furthermore, these original conceptions of intersectionality articulated the idea that a Black woman could be, at the same time, both privileged and oppressed while experiencing patriarchal and sexist systems of power (Crenshaw, 1989; Flippen, 2014; Nuñez, 2014). Crenshaw’s seminal papers “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politic” (1989) and “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” (1991) defined a framework and spurred a rapid interest in the development of intersectionality theory that includes at least 14 potential lines of demarcation within individual identity: race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, language, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, phenotype, and able-bodiedness (Lutz, 2002). According to Crenshaw (as cited in Yuval-Davis, 2006):

Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group...tries to navigate the main crossing in the city.... The main highway is racism road. One cross street can be

Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street.... she has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression. (p. 196)

Because the development of intersectionality theory is relatively recent (Yuval-Davis, 2006), the theory has been mostly employed in legal and gender studies of Black women, but a collection of essays published in the *Du Bois Review* in 2013 sought to explore how the development of Intersectionality Theory over time gain insight about how to the theory is currently employed and to apply the theory in places where it could be expanded. The editors of these essays argue for an expanded application of the theory across disciplines (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays & Tomlinson, 2013). Acknowledging that studies about intersectionality as it relates to Black women are far from complete, the authors encourages further research into other dimensions of identity (Cho, 2013).

Crenshaw (1989) is credited with advancing the theory in a way that emphasized particular, individualistic experiences related to social identities such as gender, race, or class rather than placing the focus on the systems of power that are either the source of or perpetuate oppression based on identity (Collins et al., 2009). In their reflective essay on mapping the development of intersectionality as a social movement, Carbado et al. (2013) acknowledge this limitation by calling it a “one-way” approach (p. 304) to intersectional analysis with the invitation to view her work as a foundation for expansion of the theory.

Anthias (2013) cites a growing debate involving the multiple approaches to intersectionality that have developed for the better part of 30 years. Rather than consider intersectionality as a theoretical framework, Anthias describes intersectionality as a heuristic process or method to comprehend the social and political limitations imposed on a person. Rather than reducing identities to a simple list with no analytical method for determining which

is most additive to the sum of oppression experienced by a person. Anthias (2013) proposes a retention of the original tenets of intersectionality as defined by Crenshaw (1989) but locating them in the larger context of systems of power to form a multilevel model of intersectionality (Anthias, 2013).

Studies conducted among the Latino population have focused on immigration (Flippen, 2014), health disparities (LaVeist-Ramos, Galarraga, Thorpe, Bell, & Austin, 2012; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda, & Abdulrahim, 2012), and higher education (Harper, 2011; Irizarry, 2012) but all within the traditional (Carbado et al., 2013) intersectional framework. Recent work by Nuñez (2013) related to Latino identity and college access employs this traditional framework within the multilevel model (Anthias, 2013). Social categories such as Latino ethnicity, immigration status, class, and gender are considered within “Second-Level” domains that include (a) organizational (positions within societal structures), (b) Representational (discursive representations of Latino identities), (c) Intersubjective (individual and intra-group relationships), and (d) Experiential (the self-constructed narratives created by Latinos about their lived experiences.) Finally, the first and second levels are situated within the historicity of Latinos: social movement, economic policy, civil rights, media perception, and political implications of Latino identity. This model is not meant to be comprehensive and leaves room for expansion and revision; however, in its current form, it answers the call to apply intersectionality in other disciplines while acknowledging that the basic identities defined in intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) can be influenced in different ways when intersecting with organizational, representational, intersubjective, and experiential domains. Further, these domains exist within the larger context of the historicity of Latinos (Nuñez, 2013). My description of Chicana feminism as a conceptual framework for this study is based on

acknowledgement that Latinas face the potential for triple oppression from white women, white men, and Latino men. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1999) further informs and helps to theorize the lived experience of Latinas in this study.

In this literature review, I have provided a summary of literature in three areas that provide a frame for the lives of Latinas in public office. Barriers and challenges that women face are cited as the historical reasons for why female representation in government lags behind men. On the other hand, the literature provides strategies for increasing the number of women who run for office. The gap that exists is a focus on cultural characteristics that create uniquely different barriers for Latinas. The obligation of women in Latino culture to remain submissive and to honor men as leaders and heads of household while subjugating their own aspirations is grounded in the supernatural and religious foundations of marianismo. Similarly, the absolute obligation to filial piety typified by familismo supersedes the pursuit of higher education or career success. Finally, intersectionality, informed by Chicana feminism, describes the positionality of Latinas who wish to adhere to traditional cultural values while rejecting oppressive and marginalizing influences of men and women.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This dissertation seeks to document the experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office. This chapter proposes the use of the testimonio methodology design guided by LatCrit and Chicana feminism to address this research question because of the need to explore oppressive and marginalizing influences throughout the personal and professional lives of Latinas in elected and appointed office. testimonio as a methodology was developed, in part, as a response to the restrictive nature of narrative inquiry (Albert & Couture, 2014). Testimonio guided by LatCrit will acknowledge and solicit private feelings, emotions, and events as they relate to the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender. This chapter will provide a brief description of narrative inquiry and the juxtaposition of testimonio as a similar but contrasting methodology within the qualitative approach. Further, the chapter will describe the use of testimonio as methodology using LatCrit and Chicana feminism as guiding frameworks to explore the gendered, racial, and cultured “layers of subordination” (Yosso, 2006, p.6) experienced by the Latinas in the study and to articulate personal stories of marginalization. In this chapter, I will also describe the process for testimonio as methodology in the proposed study. Lastly, the chapter will outline the research questions, research design, setting for the study, selection of participants, research approach including how data collection and analysis.

Testimonio as a Qualitative Method

I propose the use of testimonio as methodology to elicit personal stories and description of emotions from study participants from their own points of view and in their own voices. The intent of the study is to allow women to tell the story of their lives with special emphasis on the intersections of gender, race, class, and immigration status. While narrative interview allows the participants to create meaning about their experience by telling a story that has time-based

structure (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008; Polkinghorne, 2010; Lai, 2010) that provides a first-person interpretation of the events (Holley & Colyar, 2012), the testimonio methodology in this study frames the stories within the context of oppression and injustice that affects Latinas in politics (Huber 2012). Polkinghorne (2010) points out that narrative thinking and analysis of the past can help a person to craft goals for the future or to alter perspectives related to decision-making. Huber (2012) accepts this assertion and expands on it by citing the need for a more specific methodology that accounts for the intersectionality of critical variables of Latinas as they tell their life stories for the purpose of educational research. It is the explicit intent of testimonio to confront marginalization of non-dominant groups and to provide a vehicle for advocacy and social justice.

Albert and Couture (2014) credit Dilthey as the having been the first to define the importance of exploring lived experiences as a means to understand the human condition in the 1800s. According to Dilthey (1985), lived experiences are those that are “a reflexive or self-given awareness that inheres in the temporality of consciousness of life as we live it...only in thought does it become objective” (van Manen, 1990, p. 35). Subsequently, other authors built upon this work and continued the evolution of narrative inquiry including Thomas and Znaniecki’s. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* in the early 1900s (Albert & Couture, 2014; Chase 2005) and Mills’ 1959 discussion of “biography, history, and society” (Chase, 2005, p. 651). Additionally, Chase (2005) points out Barthes’ and Duisit’s (1975) and Riessman’s (1990) contributions to narrative research highlight the ubiquitous presence of narrative in human lives and how this methodology can be used as a model for describing the lived experiences of women.

Chase (2005) defines a narrative as spoken or written words and can be collected as data in a variety of ways: observation during field work, structured or semi-structured interviews, or in the course of a conversation with a study participant. The length of the narrative is not defined, but should include information about an event, specific people or composite characters, a significant life event or time period, or even the person's entire lifetime since birth. The latter is often referred to as the Life History while the former are Life Stories not inclusive of an entire lifetime while still containing descriptions of seminal events. Figure 1 illustrates the location of narrative research or narrative inquiry approaches, in addition to others, as a method for qualitative data collection.

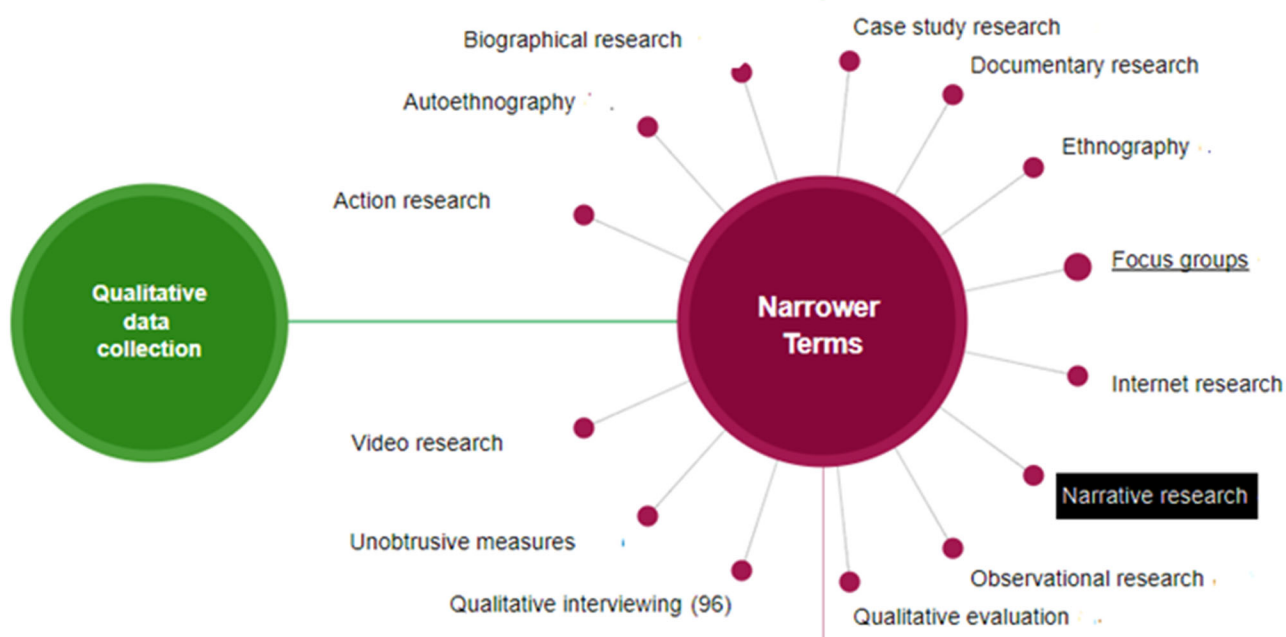


Figure 1. Method map. From “Methods Map: Qualitative Data Collection,” by Sage Research Methods, 2018 (<http://methods.sagepub.com/methods-map/qualitative-data-collection>). Copyright 2018 by Sage Publications. Reprinted with permission.

Further development of narrative inquiry occurred during the civil rights movements related to gender and race in the 1960s and 1970s and caused a revival in the use of life history as a method of narrative inquiry. Specifically, research focused on women's feminist experiences (García, 1997) and personal narratives of former slaves were essential to this resurgence. During

this time period, the beliefs and values of non-dominant groups, such as women and persons of color, were not being adequately acknowledged through other approaches to qualitative research. Additionally, these non-dominant groups were often victims of social injustice who had no voice or their voices were being filtered through the lens of a researcher belonging to a dominant group (Bernal, 2002). This is what motivated researchers to challenge the methodology of narrative inquiry and place a greater emphasis on life histories and personal narratives, but within the context of social justice. Two important shifts (Figure 2) that occurred as a result of this new focus was the interest in a particular person rather than the event or social issue in which she was involved. The difference highlighted the person as the source of change or action rather than highlighting the effects of the change on the person. The second shift was the examination of the power relationship in narrative research. The status quo had been to treat participants as objects of research whose personal narratives were interpreted through the lens and voice of the researcher. The evolution of personal narrative challenged the accepted standards of “voice, authenticity, interpretive authority, and representation” (Chase, 2005, p. 655).

Although narrative inquiry has long been viewed as a method for making meaning from life histories, it is also considered too restrictive because of its attention to short personal stories that employ literary devices such as characters and plot and offer testimonio as a methodology better suited to explore stories of oppressed populations (Albert & Couture, 2014). In her chapter on narrative inquiry, Chase (2005) goes on to describe testimonio as a type of oral or life history that specifically addresses oppression or activism among Latin American populations and cites Menchú (1984) and Moyano, Tupac, and Edmisten (2000).

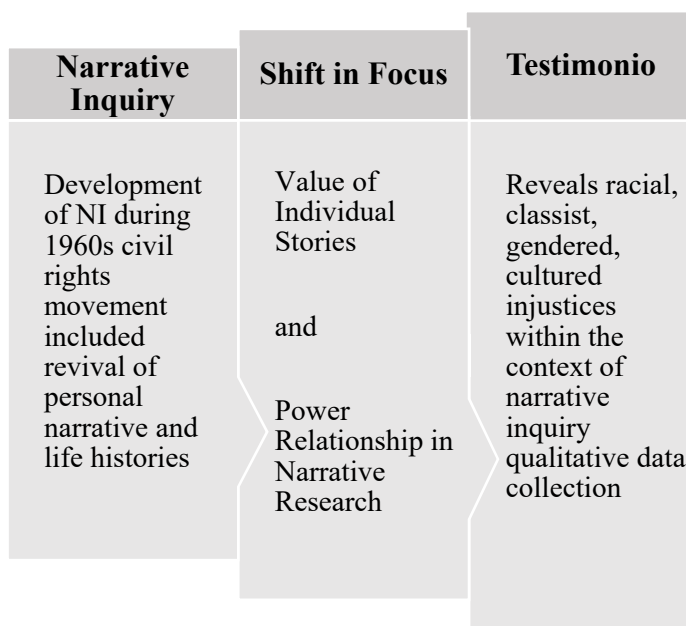


Figure 2. Shift in focus to support use of testimonio. The change in historical and social context that facilitated the use of testimonio as methodological approach.

Testimonio as a methodology is defined as “a verbal journey of a witness who speaks to reveal the racial, classed, gendered, and nativist injustices they have suffered as a means of healing, empowerment, and advocacy for a more human present and future.” (Huber, 2010, p. 83). Furthermore, Huber characterizes testimonio as mechanism of defiance of the Eurocentric epistemology that has traditionally pervaded narrative inquiry. Her assertion is that the widely-accepted methodology of narrative interview to solicit life histories is predicated on the idea that a person can be successful if they work hard enough because all people participate in and are treated equally in social, political, and economic environments. Furthermore, she asserts that, through traditional narrative inquiry, knowledge and understanding can only be achieved through one avenue (Huber, 2008). Bernal and Villalpando (2002) define this limitation as an “apartheid of knowledge” (p. 171) in which institutions of higher learning are the main sources of knowledge and that researchers trained in traditional methodologies are responsible for shaping the concept of what is and what is not considered valid data. Other characterizations of the

phenomenon that defines what is valid and what is not are academic colonization (Cordova, 1998), regime of truth (Foucault, 1977), and epistemological racism (Scheurich & Young, 1997). These paradigms are rooted in Eurocentric patriarchy and are possible because scholarship from non-dominant groups had not been recognized until recently (Huber, 2008.) Other authors point to an oppression that lives in the collective memory of a group of people (Beverley, 2004; Yúdice, 1991) and that testimonio is an effective methodology for understanding the struggle experiences by study participants.

In order to gain a greater understanding of testimonio as a methodological approach and the process of collecting a testimonio from a study participant, I sought out studies who employed this methodology and found several examples that helped to guide my study design. Using the search terms, “testimonio” and “testimonio as methodology,” I explored the ProQuest dissertation/thesis database. My search yielded at least 20 studies that included research related to testimonio as a literary genre, but I chose limit my methodological literature review to studies that employed testimonio as a methodology. Table 2 provides a summary of the studies including their area of focus, study population, and the purpose of each study. The purposes of these studies highlight the common themes of a need to address racism, marginalization, culture, language, or the need to create counterstories of non-dominant groups. Although the purpose of each study that I reviewed varied greatly, each was located within a Latino educational context. These studies informed my own work related to my study design, data collection, and data analysis and provided guidance as I developed my understanding of testimonio.

Testimonio and LatCrit. Chapter 1 provided a discussion of the tenets of CRT/LatCrit that theorize how race and racism impact the field of educational research. These include the intercentricity of race and racism, the challenge to dominant ideology, the commitment to social

justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and an interdisciplinary perspective to sources of knowledge. Huber (2012) describes specific areas of alignment between testimonio and LatCrit that advance scholarship in the method and the framework:

1. Revealing injustices caused by oppression: testimonio describes the injustices People of Color face as a result of oppression. A LatCrit lens helps expose the structural conditions, which cause oppression in Latina/o communities.
2. Challenging dominant Eurocentric ideologies: implicit in the use of testimonio and a LatCrit framework is a direct challenge to the apartheid of knowledge that exists in academia.
3. Validating experiential knowledge: similar to this tenant of LatCrit, the process of testimonio builds from the lived experiences of People of Color to document and theorize oppression.
4. Acknowledging the power of human collectivity: testimonio and LatCrit acknowledge the emancipatory elements of revealing oppression through lived experiences, which are rooted in the histories and memories of a larger community.
5. Commitment to racial and social justice: revealing oppression moves People of Color toward dismantling and transforming oppressive conditions to end injustice (page 380-381).

These alignments illustrate the synergies that exist between testimonio and LatCrit, and how the combination of the two can be used to theorize forms of oppression such as race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability/disability, religion, and age (Collins, 1990). This study is located within a specific community of Latinas: those who serve in public office and who challenge the historicity of the notion that political power in government only belongs to Anglo men.

Furthermore, my study seeks to emphasize and validate the experiential knowledge of Latinas who have been raised in a Latino family environment, who have campaigned, and who have served in public office. Through data analysis, their experiences form a collective experience with a focus on social justice and the revelation of oppressive and marginalizing forces.

Table 2

Dissertations Employing Testimonio as Methodology

Author	Year	Study Participants	Focus	Purpose
Huber, L.	2010	Undocumented and U.S. born Chicana College Students	Discourses of Racist Nativism in Education	Explores how discourses of racist nativism emerge in the educational trajectories of Chicana student; explores similarities of undocumented and U.S. born women and the strategies used to navigate higher education
Cueva, B.M.	2013	Chicana/Native American Women at PhD Level in Higher Education	Racism, white privilege, and complex power relations	Examine the types, context, effects, and responses that the women use to strategically navigate through their doctorates in predominately white public universities
Zuniga, J.G.	2014	Latinas/Chicanas	Spirituality	Investigate how spirituality influences the work of Latinas/Chicana leaders in educational roles in postsecondary institutions in New Mexico and Texas borderland region
Soltero Lopez, A.K.	2014	Undocumented Latina/o Students	Negative stereotypes associated with Latina/o immigrants	Study the effects that macro-social policies have on the micro-social psyche, behavior, identity, social interactions, and academic experiences of undocumented students
Sosa-Provencio, M.A.	2014	Mexican-American/Mestiza female educators	Ethic of Care	Understand Ethic of Care manifested in the daily actions of the study participants working within schools and communities that have and continue to experience educational, cultural, linguistic, and economic domination
Huante-Tzintzun, N.	2016	Chicana/Latina education scholars	Building theory and tools that interrogate power, truth, ethics, and social justice	Explore methodological tools that are available for decolonial strategies within institutional university research and what is at stake for researchers in choosing qualitative research methods in research and practice.

Research Questions

This qualitative study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the racial, gendered, and cultured experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office at the state and federal levels, if any?
2. What do testimonios of Latinas reveal about oppression and marginalization, if any?
3. How do Latinas create meaning from racial, gendered, and cultured experiences while in elected or appointed office?

This study proposes a testimonio as methodology based on narrative interview design to address this research question because descriptions of the personal lives of Latinas is an intimate experience involving parts of their lives that could include private feelings, emotions, and events. I anticipate that these experiences would be best communicated through a narrative process that allows the participant to tell the story of her life. Interview questions provide a prompt to begin the conversation, but the stories are expected to emerge naturally with probing and follow-up questions as needed to encourage the participants to elaborate on or to explore a concept introduced during the interview. The narrative interview process is intended to provide a mechanism to organize the entire interview into a plot with characters, a unique perspective, and characters that is easily conceptualized (Brinkman & Kvale, 2014).

Sampling

The sample for this study consists of female persons who self-identify as Latina or Hispanic and who have been elected or appointed to public office at the county, state, or federal levels. Women were recruited from the legislative, judiciary, or diplomatic areas of government. In the course of my own civic and political volunteer activities, I created opportunities to discuss my dissertation topic with elected and appointed Latinas and inquire generally about interest in participating in this study. Many answered affirmatively. I also had occasion to participate in meetings of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Latino Health Working Group at the

Department of Health and Human Services during the Obama administration. Participation in these also exposed me to Latina elected officials at the federal level i.e., members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Again, I inquired generally about interest in participating in my dissertation study and was answered in the affirmative. Finally, I also reached out to male members of the U.S. House of Representatives and their staff to describe my study and solicit help in identifying and contacting Latina members of the House of Representatives or other elected or appointed bodies.

Given the high-profile nature of the profession, elected officials are sometimes reluctant to discuss personal experiences. I dedicated significant time to cultivating relationships with Latinas in public service to demonstrate my intent to document testimonios with integrity and without malice. I have engendered trust so that their testimonios are robust, and that they are likely to recommend other participants from among their colleagues for the study. This process of personal and professional network has facilitated by ability to use a network sampling method (Bernal, 1997; Gándara, 1995).

Based on a review of sample size among PhD dissertations, Mason (2010) found that the number of participants in those studies ranged from as few as 1 and as many as 95. The mean number of participants was 31. Although he concludes that saturation should be a guiding principle when designing qualitative research studies, he advises researchers to consider whether saturation is the objective of sample selection. Factors that influence whether or not saturation is realized in a given study include the proficiency of the researcher, the level of familiarity with the topic (Jette, Grover, and Keck, 2003), and the purpose of the study and its design (Charmaz, 2006). With this sampling framework in mind, I also identified five national political organizations whose focus is women, Latinos, or Latinas. These organizations have a

combined reach of more than five thousand persons and include the (a) Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), (b) Latinas Represent, (c) National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), (d) the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, (e) and the Latino Victory Project. I contacted each of these organizations to locate contact information (phone number and/or email) for previous and current office holders. Additionally, I visited the webpages of current office holders to locate this information and generated a spreadsheet of 141 women. I sent letters of invitation via email to the email addressed recorded in this spreadsheet. I received two replies declining and two replies accepting the invitation almost immediately. I waited one week and then made phone calls and asked to speak to the staff member responsible for scheduling. After explaining the purpose and scope of my study, the staffers either directed me to re-send the letter of invitation to the same address or they provided an alternate address to which I should send it. One month after the initial invitation, I made additional phone calls repeating the same process of speaking to staff and re-sending the letter of invitation. Furthermore, I had occasion to travel to Washington, DC, and I took advantage of this opportunity to visit the offices of potential participants to make requests for participation in-person. The recruitment process occurred over five months near the end of the 2017. Many of the potential participants expressed a desire to participate but were hindered by time. Many were in the midst of active campaigns whose primaries were held in Spring of 2018. Ultimately, this process yielded seven participants.

Data Collection

A total of seven testimonios were collected. Each of the participants indicated that, given the demands of their respective offices, their time was extremely limited; therefore, one interview per participant was conducted. The interviews lasted between one hour and two and a

half hours and explored personal and professional life experiences. I encouraged the participants to choose a quiet, personal setting such as a home or private office to encourage intimacy of conversation while still creating an interview environment where the participants' feel at ease to share personal feelings and emotions (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). All but one was conducted in a private setting. One was conducted in a public restaurant. Although many of the participants are fluent Spanish speakers, interviews were conducted in English. It is a cultural habit for native Spanish speakers to employ Spanish or English/Spanish (Spanglish) phrases for emphasis or clarification. I am a conversational Spanish speaker and fully comprehended these phrases when they were used during the interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded via digital flash recorder with external microphones. These recordings were downloaded imported to a personal, password-protected laptop in MP3 format.

Transcription of Audio Recordings

Immediately following the collection of each testimonio, I listened to the complete audio recording without distraction. Transcripts of testimonios of all participants were created from the audio recordings. In consideration of time and expense, I utilized three methods for producing transcribed text. I personally transcribed the first testimonio collected while listening to the audio recording and typing into a Microsoft Word document. For four of the testimonios, I utilized a paid, third-party transcription service to produce the data set. Finally, I employed Google Voice Typing to translate two of the testimonios. Google Voice Typing is accomplished by opening a "Google doc" while playing the audio from the same device. The Google Voice Typing then produces text. Spanish phrases were not transcribed, but when necessary during data analysis, I referred to the original audio recording to ensure precise translation from the testimonio.

Following transcription of all testimonios, each participant received a copy of their transcript via email.

The third-party transcription service was the most efficient because it produced well-formatted, verbatim text in a short amount of time but incurred significant monetary expense. Transcribing the audio recording myself produced the same verbatim text and incurred no expense, but this method required a significant amount of time due to my inexperience as a transcriptionist. The third method incurred no expense but proved to be the most challenging because Google Voice Typing sometimes produces phrases, fragments, and unintelligible data. Extra time was expended to edit the transcripts for clarity and accuracy while listening to the original audio recording.

Protection of Human Subjects

To ensure the protection of human subject, I followed specific research guidelines established by the University of the Incarnate Word and have also completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative course. Great care was taken to protect the rights of the participants, their identities, and their rights to privacy. Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent document and agreed to have their voice recorded. Participants were informed that their name would be anonymized as indicated the on the consent form. Participants' names or other identifying information is masked in transcripts or other relevant materials. The participants were given a pseudonym that will be used for all subsequent research purposes. Audio recordings and transcriptions were stored on a password-protected laptop stored in a locked office. I am the only person that had access to the dataset. University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board approval was obtained before commencing research.

Data Analysis Procedures

The length and depth of the testimonios produced a data set that was, at first, overwhelming and unwieldy. The testimonios of the Latinas described their experiences from childhood through adulthood and included stories of college, motherhood, marriage, and career. The goal of employing testimonio in this study was to give voice to the women who cannot tell their stories for fear of retribution or jeopardizing their careers, and findings gleaned from these testimonios can contribute to the body of literature when sufficiently analyzed with the goal of developing theory and conceptual framework (Delamont, 2016). Wolcott (1994) describes the process of data analysis as a means of exerting centripetal force on the data in order to focus and refine the dataset as opposed to the a more centrifugal nature of interpretation. Prior to each interview and before beginning data analysis, I reviewed the research questions outlined in this study. They were: (a) What are the racial, gendered, and cultured experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office at the state and federal levels, if any?; (b) What do testimonios of Latinas reveal about oppression and marginalization, if any?; and (c) How do Latinas create meaning from racial, gendered, and cultured experiences while in elected or appointed office?

Marshall and Rossman (2006) define data analysis as the “process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data” as a “messy, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating” endeavor (p. 154). The generation of codes, categories, and themes requires organization, immersion in the data, and an ability to be open to unexpected patterns that may arise during analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Simultaneous data collection and analysis are recommended to facilitate the creation of these codes, categories, themes, and patterns. In fact, Delamont (2016) warns that the researcher should code “wildly” (p. 133) and often. She advises that it might be necessary to stop data

collection in order to perform preliminary analysis. In this study, data analysis was performed through constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965) in which the data were coded and compared within categories, and categories were compared to each other. This comparison enabled some categories to differentiate from others, and as the properties of other categories emerged, they integrated or combined to form a singular category. The process of constant comparative analysis, guided by the LatCrit theoretical framework and the research questions, was intended to generate the findings of this study.

Guided by the basic rules of Delamont (2016), I mined the transcripts for phrases, words, and events that represented common conditions and circumstances related to the research questions. In order to accomplish this, I made notes on the hard copy of each transcript. The words and phrases were transcribed verbatim into an excel spreadsheet column. Each testimonio produced between 50-150 individual pieces of data that was assigned a code. The coded words and phrases created patterns that were subsequently identified as patterns or categories. This process of identifying significant or remarkable words and phrases that leads to the production of categories is called code mapping (Brown, 1999) and is necessary to clearly present my process for generating themes and findings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In response to the criteria necessary for establishing credibility and validity of the data analysis that result in the finding presented in this study, Brown (1999) cites four questions presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to which research should respond. The first question interrogated the credibility of the findings of the study. In this study, the data set is a verbatim transcription of the words of the study participants supported by audio-recordings that establish tone, inflection, and demeanor of the women. The sample size of seven testimonios coupled with my own knowledge of the topic (Mason, 2010) cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998) supports the

credibility of the findings. In addition, Glaser (1965) points to the importance of the ability of the researcher to trust what she knows about her own data, what she has studied, and what she has experienced in the research process. If she feels it “in her bones, then she can feel the worth of the final analysis.” (p. 8).

Secondly, Lincoln and Guba (1985), as cited by Brown (1999), ask: “How transferable and applicable are these findings to another setting or another group of people?” (p. 127). The women in the study represent diverse perspectives relative to their geography in the United States, public office held, number of years in office, country of origin, age, and family relationships. In Chapter 1, I establish the heterogeneity of Latinos as a ethno-racial group but with shared cultural values and awareness. These elements support transferability and applicability to other male and female groups of Latinos. Glaser (1965) reminds that the aim of constant comparative analysis is to generate a plausible framework about a general phenomenon, such as the experiences of Latinas. The process is not intended to determine universality or to prove the legitimacy of the lived experiences of Latinas.

The third question inquires about the potential to replicate the study with the same population and under the same circumstances and context (Brown, 1999). Careful code mapping and transparent data analysis addresses the issue of reliability. Similarly, at every stage of the study, I have preserved personal notes, field notes, resources, recruitment documents, and participant contact information to enable another researcher to replicate this work and produce similar findings. These are all components of cumulative process of preparation, fieldwork, and analysis and was intended to meet the goal of sound research practices (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Brown (1999) also cites Lincoln and Guba's (1985) final question that seeks to confirm that the findings are an accurate representation of the experiences of the study participants and not due to bias and prejudice introduced by the researcher. In this study, I have employed strategies to prevent my own lens from obscuring the findings and to guard against inserting my own worldview to the extent that it would misrepresent the lived experiences of the study participants. Strategies included clarification of my own bias through self-reflection, presenting discrepant narratives from some of the study participants that were incongruent with others in the study, and the use of lengthy direct quotations aided by thick description to avoid using my own voice to interpret the words of the Latinas. In short, I let them speak for themselves in their own words. This is reflected in the Spanish title of this study: *sus propias palabras*. Finally, I enlisted two peer researchers to review and interrogate my process, including the analysis and findings. This process of peer debriefing lends to the validity of the study while simultaneously safeguarding against my own bias and prejudice (Creswell, 2014).

Data Analysis

The purpose of the data analysis is to “[bring] order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.154). It was not a separate stage of the research process (Delamont, 2016); rather, it was conducted through constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965) resulting in an iterative process that produced code mapping and salient themes. Figure 3 provides an illustration of the findings as they emerged from this process. The first iteration are the initial codes, though not exhaustive, guided by theory and the research question. The words of the study participants are assigned a descriptive phrase that encapsulates a condition or circumstance experienced and vocalized by the women.

The second and third iterations of the data analysis process revealed patterns in the words of the Latinas that generated categories and themes derived from the initial codes. While grounded in the seemingly commonplace descriptions of the women, the importance of their words becomes significant when considered in a larger context and subject to a centrifugal force (Wolcott, 1994) associated with interpretation. I addressed the testimonios individually but present them in this section as aggregate data. Other forms of documenting the historical figures such as Sonia Sotomayor focus on the exceptionalism of the individual. In contrast, testimonio tells the story of members of a community who cannot be differentiated from one another. It is possible for the testimonios to stand alone as autobiographical accounts or life stories, the purpose of testimonio is to tell a “collectively experienced reality.” (Brabeck, 2003, p. 253).

Testimonio as a methodology guided by LatCrit allows for the creation of knowledge from within a non-dominant group, specifically Latinas in public service. The use of this methodology counters the assertion that some knowledge in academia is legitimate and some is not (Huber, 2012). Testimonio as methodology is a tool for the creation of knowledge from within communities of color (Huber, 2009). In response to the critique that qualitative research, and doctoral dissertations in particular, should be methodologically sound and analytically defensible (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002), I have employed constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965) coupled with an iterative process (Brown, 1999) in order to achieve a high level of detail, transparency, and clarity.

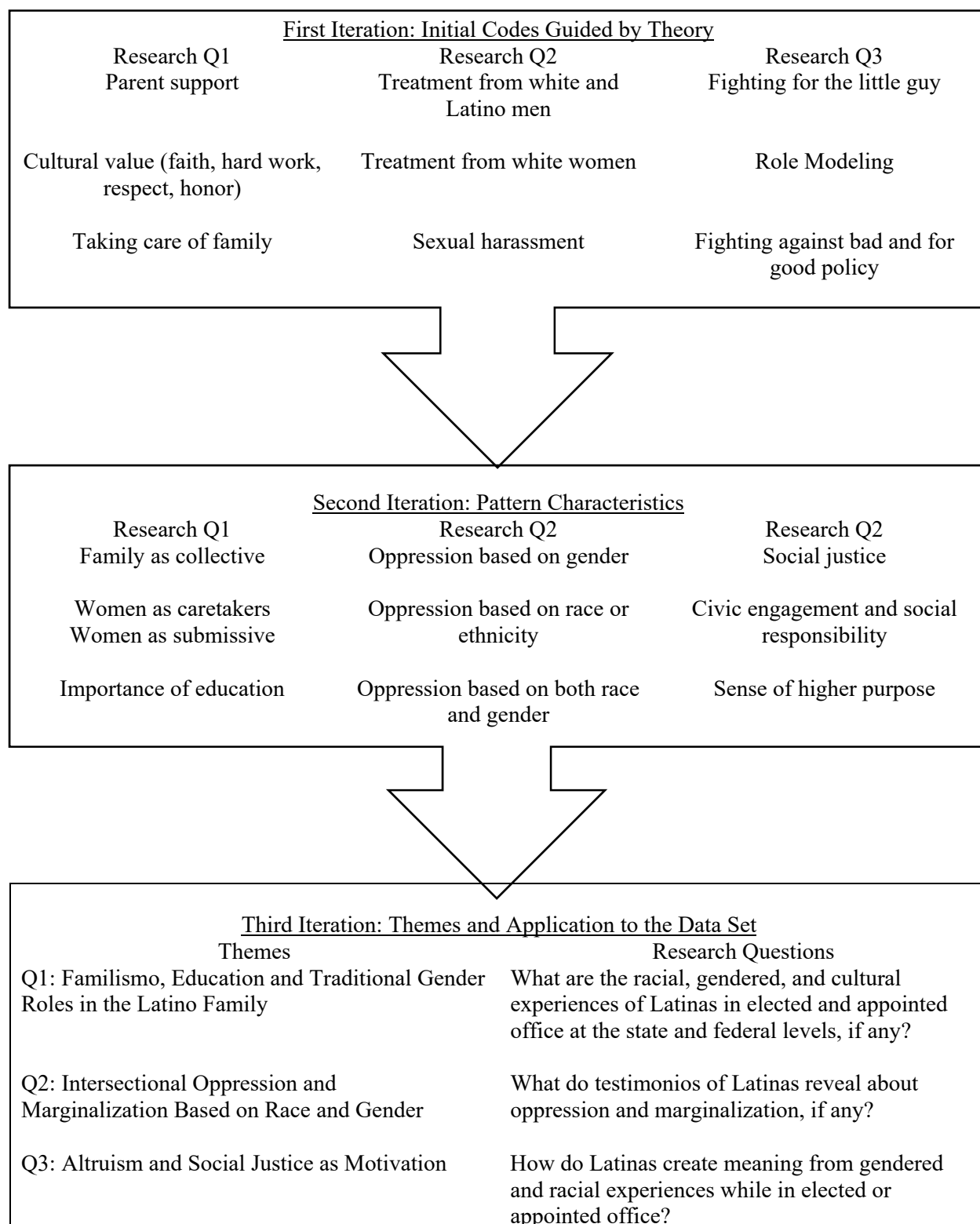


Figure 3. The iterative process of constant comparative data analysis (Brown, 1999).

Chapter 4: Findings

When I set out to conduct this study, I was inspired by the work of Lindsay Huber (2009) and her use of testimonio as a methodology guided by LatCrit. Her epistemological journey through Chicana feminism resonated with me and my own journey through the dissertation process. Her description of the power of testimonio guided my work as I sought to lift up the voices of Latinas in public office. Huber defines this power as the ability to “trust ourselves in the ways we know, understand and interpret the world and recognize this knowledge as valid and valuable to the research process.” (p. 86). Over the course of this study, I have acknowledged my ability to trust in my own cultural intuition (Bernal, 1998) as it guided the data analysis process. I present the findings gleaned from this process and honor the voices of the women by using their own words. The women describe the (a) the centrality of familismo and its influence on gender expectations and educational attainment, (b) experiences of oppression, marginalization, and discrimination, and finally, (c) the words of the women reveal the wisdom gained and meaning created as a result of their lived experiences. Based on constant comparative analysis that facilitated the creation of coded data and categories and guided by research questions, six themes emerged from this analysis. I have assigned a pseudonym to each of the participants, and other identifying information has been masked to protect the identity of the women. This masking includes cities, countries of origin, offices held, and the names of other persons discussed in their testimonios. When I present excerpts from the testimonios of the women, I provide my own words as context and to supplement the narrative.

I was very mindful of the very limited number of Latinas in elected office. Data presented in Chapter 1 of this study describes how few Latinas are elected to state and federal office. Consequently, discerning the identities of the participants might not be difficult if a study was limited to my own home state or to only Latinas in state or federal office. In order to maintain

confidentiality and to respect the intimate nature of the testimonios of the participants, I invited Latinas who serve in the legislative and judiciary branches of government at the county, state, and federal levels, as well as, Latinas who have been appointed to office in the public sector. In addition, I took great care to invite women from outside of my home state. Consequently, the women who chose to participate live and work in various states across the United States. Table 3 provides an overview of the personal and professional characteristics of the women in the study.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Years in Office</u>	<u>Number of Campaigns</u>	<u>Elected or Appointed</u>	<u>Branch of Government</u>	<u>Self Identifies</u>
Alejandra	Non U.S., large city	60-70	15	5	Elected	Judiciary	Latina
Carmen	U.S., small city	40-50	3	3	Elected	Judiciary, Legislative	Latina
Estella	US, small city	40-50	11	4	Elected	Judiciary, Legislative	Latina
Daniela	U.S., small town	60-70	15	4	Elected	Judiciary	Latina
Julia	U.S., small city	60-70	25	0	Appointed	Diplomatic Service	Latina
Pricilla	U.S., small city	60-70	20	3	Elected and Appointed	Judiciary	Latina
Susana	Non U.S., small town	60-70	25	12	Elected	Legislative	AfroLatina

Nearly all were born in small towns but moved to larger towns to attend college or for work. All except two were over the age of 60 and had extensive experience in politics as illustrated by their years in office and the number of campaigns they have conducted. In the next section, I present

short biographical sketches of each participant to provide context about who they are personally and professionally. The descriptions I provide, in alphabetical order, are intentionally vague to respect the testimonios provided and to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the women.

Biographical Summaries of the Study Participants

Alejandra was born outside of the United States and is between the ages of 60 and 70 years of age. She has run for elected office five times and served for over 15 years. Her father was very well- educated, and her mother discontinued her education before entering middle school. Despite the lack of formal instruction, Alejandra described her mother as self-educated, gregarious, and always supportive of Alejandra's aspirations. She came to the United States as a child and remained even after her parents decided to return to their home country. She moved in with neighbors as an adolescent in order to complete high school and college. The city in which she was raised and now lives is a large metropolitan area and is 20% Latino or Hispanic. After her marriage, and once she had children, she returned to live in her home country for a brief period before returning to the United States and embarking on her career as an elected official.

Carmen was born in the United States in a small city with a majority Latino or Hispanic population. She is between 40 and 60 years of age, and both of her parents were born in the United States. Her father received his high school diploma and attended some college. Carmen's mother initially quit high school but eventually received her diploma some years later. Carmen describes her mother as a voracious reader and a significant source of support for Carmen's educational and political aspirations. Carmen has stood for office in the judiciary and legislative branches and has served a total of three years.

Estella has held elected office for one year and has participated in four campaigns. She is between 40 and 60 years of age and was the 3rd generation of her family born in an American

city with a population of less than 500,000 persons and that is characterized as a majority Latino or Hispanic city. Estella's father completed his college degree, and her mother received her high school diploma. Estella attended college outside of her home state, and had aspirations of a career teaching in higher education; however, upon completing her graduate degree, she returned to her hometown and became politically active and civically engaged.

Daniela was born and raised in a small American city of less than 9,000 persons and is between 60 and 70 years of age. She has sought elected office four times over 22 years and has served a total of 15 years in office. Her father, who received his high school diploma, was born in the United States but raised in Mexico because her grandparents wanted to ensure that their children were raised in a traditionally Mexican cultural environment. Her mother, born in the United States, dropped out of high school but eventually completed her high school diploma via correspondence courses. Daniela hesitated enroll in college immediately after high school in favor of working in an office setting. After helping a friend with college-level homework, she realized that she had the capacity to continue her own education and attended a university and graduate school far from her hometown.

Julia was born in a mid-sized American city and is greater than 60 years of age. Both of her parents received their high school diplomas and continued their educations through post-secondary training in the arts and civil service. Julia spent 25 years in government and diplomatic service in European, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries with a primary goal of supporting Americans abroad and implementing American foreign policy.

Pricilla was born in the United States in a small American city and is greater than 60 years of age. Neither of her parents completed high school, but their small business thrived due to their strong work ethic and self-taught business acumen. She identifies as a Mexican-

American and is very proud of breaking gender and racial barriers in her profession. As a member of the judiciary, she has been appointed once and elected three times.

Susana was born outside of the continental United States and self-identifies as Afro-Latina. She was raised in a large American city but decided to pursue college in a smaller city out-of-state. Her mother completed high school, but her father did not. She laments the fact that many people she encounters, including colleagues, are incapable of perceiving her as a multi-cultural person. Rather, they tend to view her as either a black woman or a Latina women and have difficulty acknowledging that these two identities can co-exist in the same person. She is greater than 60 years of age, and has spent almost 25 years as an elected official.

Racial, Gendered, and Cultured Experiences

Firstly, and relevant to research question #1, the women told stories of their family dynamics, childhoods, marriages, educational experiences, and career trajectories. All of the women in the study hold or have held distinguished public offices in diverse sectors of government and pursued undergraduate and graduate degrees in various fields. In spite of these differences, they all articulated consistent themes related to their identity as a girl or woman and traditional gender roles in Latino families. Based on the LatCrit theoretical framework, my literature review, and my own cultural intuition, I recognized descriptions of important cultural values woven throughout their testimonios. In this section, I will present findings that illustrate the cultural value of familismo and that illuminate the role of women within families.

Familismo and Education. The influence of traditional Latino cultural values is central to the experiences of the women in the study. In most instances, these cultural values were modeled by parents and grandparents and provided a foundation for the worldview and professional conduct of the women as they were running for and once they were elected or

appointed to office. These include familismo, the importance of family unity and cohesion, and marianismo, the belief that girls and women should adhere to gender expectations of femininity, purity, and subservience. Others discussed by the participants were faith/religiosity, honor, respect, and the commitment to a strong work ethic. One manifestation of familismo was the idea that education is a mechanism by which the family can be *mejorado* or financially or socially bettered. All of the women experienced significant support related to education, sometimes at the expense of geographical and emotional proximity to family. In some instances, both parents were equally supportive, and in others, one or the other parent was the primary force advancing the cause.

Pricilla was born in the United States into what she characterizes, in her words, as a typical Hispanic family, but clarifies that her family identifies as a Mexican because that is the birthplace of her parents:

We were living with my grandmother and my parents – so we lived there for a number of years until I was about ready to start elementary school, and then we moved. The family was devastated because we were moving very far away from them. My grandmother and my aunt, she was my nina, my madrina and a number of my aunts and uncles who all lived in that area. My dad didn't have a family. He was separated from his father who had criminal charges and he was put in a boys' school and his mother had died at the birth of his youngest brother. So he was pretty much raised in a youth home. So we moved up there and my mom at that time, we had five. There were five of us. I'm the oldest and I have two brothers and two sisters. And so we moved up there and I then started school up there. And one of the things, well we started school and I started going to school.

Pricilla explains that her father was motivated to move the family over the objections of her grandmother and extended family because of his concern of the quality of education that she would receive in a small town. At the same time, a mysterious, and possibly scandalous, event occurred in the family. Pricilla has repeatedly asked her father about the nature of the event that precipitated the move, but could only conclude that “something happened,” and he felt the need

to move his family in order to maintain control. In addition, access to a larger city and a better education for her and her siblings were motivating factors:

And so there was in the paper this advertisement that you could send away for this kit and learn how to repair radios. And at that time – record players. And so they sent away for that program and then this is when we were still living with the family. At night my mom would read the lessons to my dad because my dad never graduated – well neither one of them graduated from high school.

And dad I think only got to go to school to maybe about the elementary school maybe sixth or seventh grade. So mom would read the lessons for him and he would work on his little kit that they would send him. So he taught himself how to repair radios and record players. And then he went and got a job with this man [who] took my dad in to work with him as a repairman. So that's how my – and then my parents, my dad slowly learned more and more and he also taught himself how to fix [televisions] and then the color [televisions] came out.

Susana's upbringing had a very different cultural manifestation of familismo, but it was also driven by her parents' belief that sacrifices must be made in order to receive the best education. Susana was born outside of the United States as the eldest in a family of six children. Their cultural custom dictates that the oldest is sent to live with the grandparent in order to provide care for elders as well as to lessen the financial burden of raising large families. Susana's mother worked in a restaurant and had a regular customer who favored Susana and invited her to come live with her. Susana aspired to become a teacher, and it was decided that she should be sent to the United States to complete her education:

And my mom thought it would've been good for me to go because [this woman] kept asking for me to come and live with her, and my mom thought it was a great thing for us to go – for her children to be able to have an opportunity to have an education in the United States. She always felt that the way we could get ahead in life was to get an education in the United States. So, for that reason, she sent me to live with her. It was hard. The very first time that I saw snow in [the United States], I sat up all night at the window and look at that snow. I was amazed – amazed – to watch the snowflakes fall which I had never seen before. It was freezing. It was hard, but the goal was my mom wanted me to have an education in America.

Like Pricilla and Susana, Alejandra also experienced a separation from her family in pursuit of her education. Her parents came to the United States when she was a child, and she enjoyed a privileged life in a wealthy area. As Alejandra prepared to begin high school, her parents decided to return to their home country. Alejandra had become attached to her life in the United States and was reluctant to return with them:

I didn't want to go back. I was about to go into high school, and I did not want to. My life was here. And my father understood that there was no future for a bright young woman in [our home country]. Their schools were not the same kind of environment here. The schools in Latin America, they're only private. They're generally religious, and I have never – my parents never wanted to put me in a religious school. They had both had very negative experiences, so he fully understood what the benefit of an American public education because it was totally public education, and, here, in [this] county, which has excellent schools. And so he understood. Also, his message to me was always, you know, you're smart, you can do whatever it is that you want. You can fly. And I believed him. Nobody was giving me the negative messages as a child.

Again, the level of education attained by Alejandra's parents greatly influenced their decision to separate their family in order to provide a superior education for their daughter:

My mother was always extremely supportive, but she had never really even finished sixth grade. She was an incredibly self-educated woman, very gregarious, and very outgoing, but not in an academic sense. So my academic view of the world, my learning view of the world really came from my father. My father, though, because he had been at law school, and his parents died when he was young, he was kind of on his own, with enough wealth, but very much involved with what was the political environment that he was growing up in. So when the time came, I asked him, I want to stay, and he said, okay. Which was very enlightening for a Latino father, with his only daughter, for him to say, okay.

I graduated, and then went off to college. And so from then on, I pretty much was in charge of my own future. I didn't have counseling for college. I didn't have, you know, the overall familial support. But I did have, obviously, the unfailing message from my father that of course I was gonna go to college. Of course, I was gonna get an education.

These three women demonstrate the difficult decisions that their parents made, informed by their own experiences, or lack of, related to education. The promise of increasing access to high quality education supersedes the idea of the intact family unit no matter the cost. In these cases, the cost was obtaining an exemplary education instead of keeping children near their extended or

immediate family. For other women who participated in the study, they remained with their parents, but their ardent support for their daughters' education was comparable. Carmen recalls her move from public school to private school:

I went to public school for elementary. And my mom, my [sibling] older, my mom put her, so my parents put [them] in catholic private school because they felt that the public education system where we lived, which was not the richest part of town. We were one of the poorest districts and my mom felt that we weren't getting the best education. They were willing to do whatever they could to get us a great education. They wanted to put me [in Catholic school] and I was so angry and I didn't want to go because I was happy where I was. I was in my community with my friends. This is so funny. The high school that I would have gone to they had a [extracurricular sport], and that's what I wanted to be and you're taking away where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. I was like, and 'you're going to send me to an all girls' Catholic school? Are you crazy?' I had no choice. It was really hard coming out of my community.

The reason for Carmen's mother's insistence on a private education differs from other participants in the study, and it is rooted in her father's sense of machismo and perceived need to protect his stature as head of the household. Her mother married at a very young age, quit high school, and she settled into a subservient role as wife and mother. Carmen's father graduated high school many years late, and never pursued a college degree. Fueled by insecurity and alcoholism, he actively sabotaged his wife's attempt to earn her high school diploma. This became the stimulus for Carmen's mother's enthusiasm toward her daughter's education:

My dad was older than my mom. Very much – "I run this family, I bring the paycheck home, you don't question me." Going out on weekends. I remember growing up and not seeing him because he'd be drinking at the bar and doing his thing, and my mom was taking care of us. She had so much potential had she been able to go to school. The woman reads! Voraciously and has taught herself stuff. She always told me and my sister "I don't want this for you. My goal is to get you educated." She doesn't want us to ever be dependent on a man. To ever be stuck, to feel we can't get out if we're unhappy with a marriage or a job or a situation.

"I want you to have an education so you never have to put up with BS." And so she always instilled that. I think from what I saw in their marriage; you don't have to put up with it. You can leave, you can leave, you can leave.

I think [my dad] graduated high school when he was like 20. She would encourage him to go to community college. Maybe take a class. And then, she tried to go to school and my dad wasn't having it. 'He made my life hell. He never wanted me to finish.' She would enroll and he would just bitch at her. "You need to take care of the

kids.” And just make her life hard. “If you’re not supportive, why bother? You’re coming home angry.” She just didn’t end up finishing. Although she tried. She got her GED. So, I was happy she got her GED.

So, I was home. Not letting me play outside with kids. Had me reading. Had me copy the dictionary. Had me reading books and then I would have to do a book report to her [laughs]. I really wasn’t allowed to go out with friends. I didn’t really start doing that ‘til high school, until my junior year. I wasn’t allowed to sleepover until my junior year. I think she was really trying to keep me on the straight and narrow. I thank her for that because I used to resent her for that. “Why are you so...? I mean – you won’t let me breath. What is the deal? You don’t trust me?” She had me so sheltered and I understand it now.

For Daniela, her father was the source of strong support and encouragement related to college.

Although her mother was generally supportive, it was professional work experiences of her father that reinforced the need for higher education:

Neither one of my parents went to college. My dad was raised in Mexico. My mom was raised [in the United States], but my dad always encouraged me to go to college because his one regret in life was not going to college, and he used to tell me that because he had obtained a [Associate degree] - he was raised in Mexico - and then he went to school and he received a diploma.

So, Dad grew up in Mexico, and then went to a technical school, and he obtained, I guess what could be the equivalent of an Associate [degree] maybe. Ended up getting a job at [government agency] as a [entry level professional] and he had a very successful career there. But he used to tell me the story that when he first went to apply for the job and there were no *Mexicanos* at that time, and this is 1950, and his English was broken and he applied for it. Well, he had 3 days to prove himself otherwise he and out on the field like all the other Mexicans and I’m proud to say that he retired from [that job]. But all in all those years, even though he was successful in that job, he could never amount to, rise to a certain level because he didn’t have his degree and yet when the young college graduates would come in he would have to train them and he would have to supervise them. He would have to teach them, but he can never get a pay raise above a certain level because he hadn’t had that degree. So, he used to tell me ‘Go to college, go to college.’ My mom was the oldest of a large family, and so she had to drop out of high school and obtained her diploma by correspondence. But she was very intelligent. She read. Wall to wall books because that was her passion. She loved reading. Mom always worked outside the home. She didn’t really push the college thing so much his dad did, but neither one of them went on to college, so I have much of a sense of what I needed to do to, you know, be prepared about where to go or anything.

The voices of the Latinas in this study establish the importance that parents placed on education throughout their lives. This emphasis was intended to create opportunities and advancement that was inaccessible to their parents’ generation for a variety of reasons. In some instances, parents

opted to forego a public education in favor of a private, religious one. Patriarchal oppression and abusive alcoholism highlighted the need for independence from a male breadwinner, and access to high quality schools was seen as the most effective path to that goal. Perceived differences between Latin American and American schools provided the rationale for one father to allow his daughter to remain in the United States to complete her high school diploma. Finally, instances of marginalization based on race motivated one father to inspire ambition in his daughter.

Gender Roles and Expectations of Women and Girls. In childhood and adolescence, each of the Latinas in the study were receiving the message that they could and should claim independence and foster a strong sense of self. At the same time, they were each also receiving messages that girls and women should adhere to defined gender roles and expectations. This occurred at various points throughout their lives and were present in familial and romantic relationships.

Estella was conditioned early in life to accept her role as a female child. She is the third generation of her family born in the United States, and successfully completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in English. While growing up, she is proud of the strong family unit created by her parents and describes her role in the family as traditionally female; however, she views this role as a vital part of the team and not one that was imposed upon her against her will:

It was wonderful. A [small] community and a working-class family, four brothers. My dad was an engineer, my mom was a homemaker and very tightly-knit Mexican family. My mom has – or had 12 siblings, many of whom lived in [our hometown]. My dad had many siblings, and those who were still alive lived [there]. My dad – his family were [farm] people so I grew up near my family’s [farm], which was an extraordinary experience. It was, you know, a part of my identity, definitely.

It was just the hard work, you know, like the hard work of – that really mostly impacted my brothers. My brothers worked on the [farm] and really devoted a lot of their life to it as we were growing up. And my mom and I were very focused on the home. So when the guys were at the [farm], you know, I would help her cook, would help her clean, would help her kind of tend to everything in the home, so that when everybody got back from work – ‘cause it was considered work, you know, there were great meals and

she and I would clean up afterwards. I wouldn't say I was happy or unhappy keeping house with my mom, it was just what we did. It was that we were all a team, like the family was a team, and so certain people had certain things, you know, on the team, and then we had certain things we had to do while on that team.

You know, I just remember my mom always working, like never sitting down, never sitting down. You know, like watching the news was the only time I remember her sitting down. She was always cooking, always cleaning, always moving around, always getting stuff done.

Although Pricilla's family moved away from extended family to a larger city for the sake of education, she echoes Estella's sense of obligation to support the household. She was the eldest of four siblings by only a margin of 11 months, and around about the age of 13, she assumed responsibility for childcare when her parents were working:

And so they started working together. It was my job to take care of the kids when they came home from school and make sure that they did their chores and then I'd fix dinner for the family so that my mom and dad were working and so I would do that.

She continued in this role until high school, and her obligation to the family evolved:

Since I was helping my parents with the kids, I never got to go out and get a job – an after-school job. My job was helping with the family. 'Cause I went and I did the grocery shopping, the errands and running the kids around when I got my license. So I didn't have any skills. My sister was a car hop and she made tips, and so she got to do that. I think Louise got to do that as well. The two boys went and worked with my dad at the shop so he taught them the business.

Her parents had made it very clear to Pricilla that she would complete her high school diploma and continue to college, but they, and the extended family, also wanted to influence and ensure that the career she chose was suitable for a young woman:

They made it very clear we were gonna graduate. They did not graduate, so it made it very clear. That's why my siblings were, our goal was to graduate. They made it very clear that we were to graduate. And so when they found out that I wanted to be a lawyer, and first they tried to dissuade me from it and wanted me to be a teacher. And so the family and all, my padrinos, not so much my grandma, but my uncles were like "Teaching is a good profession 'cause women could go into teaching."

In spite of this, after completing her undergraduate degree, Pricilla attended law school with the full support of her parents. The devotion to family is repeated later in her life as she attempts to

balance her career and her role as a mother. In this instance, it is not her parents to whom she is obligated. Rather, it is her own sense of maternal responsibility to which she is beholden. She recalls an instance in which she considered giving up a chance at an elected office because she had small children who might be adversely affected by her time away from home. She emphasizes that her dedication to her family is as important as her dedication to her job.

Susana, who had been sent to the United States to pursue her education while living with a family friend, was eventually joined by her family and siblings. Her family was solidly working-class, but as a high school student, she was also expected to help her parents support the family with an emphasis on her place as a girl in the family. She describes her life as one of struggle credits this struggle with inspiring a determination to become successful in life.

Oh, the difficulty of that is that my dad worked, and my mom cleaned houses. My mom cleaned houses, and one day a week, every Thursday, she had the bigger houses that she cleaned, and every Thursday she took me out of school, and I had to go and clean the houses with her one day a week all the time and missed every Thursday from school. And, so, with that in mind of cleaning those homes, my mom would go upstairs to clean while I would the hard work downstairs, which was to bend over and clean the refrigerators and the stoves and the toilets and all that, and, so, I was determined that no matter what I was in America and I was going to get an education.

You know, my mother had to take me out one day a week because she had no choice because she had all these homes that she was cleaning and she needed help. I was the oldest, and my – I have my other – my sister and my other sister were a lot younger than me.

My brothers - in between - and they weren't going to go clean houses. I know they never took them out. You know, actually, to think about it she always put the boys on a different pedestal, like it was so important that these boys get education, these boys get money in their pockets on weekend to buy stuff, and then the rest of us – the girls – *[laughs]* was – not the same story. I see it happening. I see where boys wanted to play sports, but girls had to come home straight from school – that kind of stuff.

Like Pricilla, this sense of duty to family was recurrent when Susana married and began to raise her own family. Her spouse was supportive of her education and her career aspirations but did not play an active role as a father. In spite of this, she aspired to balance a traditional maternal role with the time required to be a successful student and professional.

I wanted to be a teacher from a kid. I wanted to get my education and I was determined – the only reason I am not a lawyer and go to law school is because you have to quit working to be a lawyer and I can't afford to do that. When I was going to college doing my master's program, I had my son, and I would put my son in a stroller, I would pack his bag with the milk and the pacifier and I would stroll him into my class and I would always sit in the corner chair where I could put the stroller next to me and put the pacifier in his mouth and go to class and go from class to class to class with my kids. Yeah, and it's tough. It's tough to do. You have to be willing to sacrifice. Like when you – in the evening on a Saturday or – you're not going out with your friends. You're not going out to dinner – you're not going to the movies – because you have a goal.

When asked to consider her role as a mother in hindsight, she is regretful at not having been more attentive and available to her children. She sees this as a failure.

They didn't see [the importance of my work] then. They needed me. They needed my time and I was [working] and I was into politics, and I was going to work and I was going to school and, yet, I make time for them, but to them back then it wasn't enough. [It makes me] sad sometimes, but then they tell me now, "You know, I understand mom." My daughter now, who's grown up, she says, 'I understand why you did the things you did because we're better off. We get to go to college. We get to do this. We get to do that.'

I didn't think I was doing anything out of the way for – that would make them feel bad because I would take them to soccer practice. I would make arrangements with different moms – "If you take my kid this week, I'll take yours this day," or things like that, and when they run track and they did soccer and there was a game in [another state], I drove to [there]. If it was in [a distant state], I drove to [that state] with my kids. I competed in everything. I took time out to do all that. So, I didn't think I was—

When I was doing the things I was doing, their dad was home, and I thought the dad was doing his stuff to be with them and he wasn't. I thought he would be there for them and he was not there for them, and that's what they talk to me about – those times. That they think I left them. I left that part of their life because I would say, "Your dad would go travel and I had to work, and your dad's going to pick you up," and he didn't come through, and he lived right there in the house with them, but he was into his own world doing his own thing.

Finally, Julia provides an example of a family that shunned the traditional gender expectations to a certain extent. Julia describes her mother as "not much of a homemaker" who traveled the world as a creative artist before settling down and marrying later in life. Her mother's influence instilled a sense of independence and free-will that carried her from childhood through adulthood. Julia's mother was one of the youngest among many siblings, including many older

sisters who were tasked with assisting their mother with care of the home. Julia's mother was free to take dance lessons and other activities afforded to a child with many sisters at home.

Although Julia was the oldest sister in her sibling group, she recalls a childhood spent attending plays at the local theater and receiving in history and astronomy from their father. The most striking incident from her childhood in which she felt the most pressure related to gender roles and expectations. At the age of sixteen, she intends to learn to drive and obtain her driver's license, and her father objects.

I remember I turned 16 and couldn't take drivers ed. I had to go to my summer school class and go to my father and tell him that [my friend] and I are going to take drivers ed. Her mother's going to take us, bring us back. I just need you to sign this paper. All I need is 20 dollars. My father said, "Your husband will teach you how to drive that's it. Nobody else is teaching you how to drive." My father didn't move. I started crying and carrying on. My mother said, "Psst. Give me that paper." She signed it. I come back with my note to have a temporary license and said to my father, "I have to go take a test to get my temporary."

"Your husband will take you to take your temporary, and that's it Julia." I'm crying and carrying on to my mom. She calls my uncle. Jose, get over here with your car, Julia needs you to take her somewhere. so Uncle Joey comes to take me. My mom didn't drive at all.

You know how you know you're supposed to drive with someone who has a license? Okay, well my mother said, "I look like I have a license that's all you need in the car" and so I said "But dad will never give me the keys." My mom says, "Wait right there." Saturday morning comes, she says [to my father] "I'm taking some clothes" and this was the truth – "I'm taking some clothes to my sister's tomorrow after mass, and I'm going to go put them in the trunk of the car. I need your keys." He gave her the keys. Now, Saturday was Football Saturday so he was fine staying home watching football. We took off for 5 hours to the mall in my dad's car, and then we came back at lunch so she can make him lunch, and she came back with the keys, and she said, "[Pedro, here are the keys. My half of the car went to the mall." He didn't say a word.

Every Saturday, she said, "Give me those key, my half of the car is going to the mall." They had traditional gender roles pretty much. Pretty much but all my mother's sisters, including my mother, all married very, very docile men and I said I just couldn't possibly. I just couldn't possibly marry a docile man somebody like my dad or like my uncle Joey or my Uncle Victor or my Uncle Jimmy. I just - they were all very docile – "Yes sweetheart, whatever you say sweetheart." And I married a Julia! A very opinionated, strong individual!

The voices of the women tell a consistent narrative about what it feels like to be a girl in a Latino family. They describe feeling obligated to serve their mothers, fathers, and siblings. From very young ages, the women were asked to care for children in the household and to contribute financially. The testimonios of these women support the concept that familismo is a priority among Latino families and that a woman's role in that family is predominantly that of caretaker. Despite the fact that the expectations for women inside the home were constrictive, the importance of higher education and the pursuit of a career was also heavily emphasized. Given the limited educational attainment of the women's mother's, this demonstrated a generational shift related to these expectations. Where their mothers were prevented from completing high school, the women in this study were encouraged to do so.

Oppression and Marginalization

For all of the women in this study, descriptions of oppression, marginalization, and discrimination were consistently revealed in the testimonios. Issues pertaining to race and gender were most commonly cited as the basis for this treatment in their personal lives, during college and graduate school, on the campaign trail, or while in office.

Two participants, Carmen and Daniela, provide recollections of racial discrimination faced by their fathers that informed understanding of their own racialized experiences. In addition, stories from their dads impacted their career choices and trajectories. Carmen recounts the experiences of her father in the military:

He shares a lot with me now that dealt with a lot of racial discrimination in the [military]. I remember at one point when I was in high school, I wanted to go into ROTC because I wanted to be [in the military] and he said 'no.' He said, "Over my dead body are you going into the military." I understand now because he shares stories about being jumped by other military members over being Mexican.

For Carmen, these stories incited a passion for public service with special emphasis on being a protector for those who cannot protect themselves. Her father's experience imbued an awareness

that people of color are particularly vulnerable and “need someone to fight for them.” Similarly, Daniela recalls similar hints of discrimination from her father.

My dad did. He did experience [discrimination] in the workplace, but he didn’t really talk about that much or bring it home that much, but later we talked about some things.

Daniela describes a childhood and adolescence where she believes, in hindsight, that she is certain she must have been the target of discrimination but was somehow oblivious to it.

Sometimes we would sit around and reminisce, and some of my friends remember [discriminatory] things that teachers would say. I think it just went over my head, I don’t know, but when I was growing up, in in our school, we really I think we’re about fifty-fifty [%] at that time between Mexicanos and gringos. I had a lot of gringo friends.

This same good friend of mine, who is my dear friend today. I got to room with her and another one of my girlfriends, and I said, ‘I want to join a sorority.’ And she laughed and she said, “You’re stupid, you’re Mexican. Mexicans don’t get into sororities unless you have a rich doctor for Dad or something like that.” I was just so disillusioned by that, and I know I learned right away. Growing up in [my hometown], I didn’t really experience discrimination. I mean, when I look back and see it, when we were young and stuff and there were some subtle things but I can’t say.

Estella provides the most explicit example of racially inflammatory words as she recounts an episode in which a political colleague had been arrested for criminal acts. The late night arrest was conducted at his home with media present. Estella believes that these tactics were used to maximize humiliation and to perpetuate the stereotype of Latinos as criminals.

They pulled him out of his house at night, and he was just in a white T-shirt. And the poor guy, like, the most unflattering – the T-shirt was too short so you saw his belly, like his hairy belly. It was just an unfortunate and like not a good photo. So the next day my – I met my friend, and she’s like, “Oh my God that photo of [him] was incredible. He just looked like a dirty – and then she caught herself and stopped.” I said, “a dirty what?” and she said, Like, he looked dirty, you know...”

Estella provides another example in which the rhetoric of her political opponent equates Estella’s ancestry with uncleanliness. The rhetoric is not an overt racial attack, but Estella believes that the implication is that people of color are both corrupt and stereotypically dirty.

[It is] an interesting subtext of late. [A supporter] just came from [my opponent’s] headquarters. She said] “I had to drop this off and [she] cornered me and was asking me why I wasn’t supporting her and why I was supporting you. I was telling her why and she was-she was really aggressive - but she kept saying that she was the clean candidate.”

That she was clean. And so I remember finding that odd. Then there was a video of an interview, and it was clear to me just because the use of the word clean was in there, that it's something they're pushing. And so [the interviewee] said, you know, "She's clean as a snowflake, clean as a snowflake" and that I have baggage. Then one of her supporters on [social media] also called her the clean candidate. The subtext is that I'm the dirty candidate, a dirty Mexican.

On the other hand, Alejandra never felt marginalized because of her race or ethnicity because she never received messaging from her parents, or anyone else, that she should be differently treated due to her race. She found no barrier to joining Greek life and enjoyed being part of a sorority and fraternity social circle. To the contrary, she believes that Latinos should shun labels.

I think a lot of what is marginalizing Latinos now is that we have swallowed that message that, oh, you're inferior. "Oh, you can't do this. Oh, you know, Hispanics are this, that, and that."

You know, this is kind of a very broad generality. But I think I've been surprised to hear – there was a panel of young women from [a Latino country] several years ago. And here was this blonde, blue-eyed [Latina] girl talking in this victimized voice. "You know, well, we, as Latinos, we don't have access to all of it." "What are you talking about?" You know, it's only when you put yourself in that sublevel class that you don't – that you self-marginalize into another category. And I think that's happening now very strongly. I don't buy into it because I really think – well, perhaps, now, there are more constraints that are socialized that way. But it doesn't have to be a constraint on Latinas or Latinos.

I think it's a social construct, you know, that, now, people are classified into – especially now, into the White supremacy, and who are all of these people that are Brown and Black, and they don't belong? And so all of those messages, over time, get communicated to groups, and they internalize it in through their own capabilities. I mean, once you believe you're inferior, then you close your own doors.

While, I think, if you don't feel inferior, you feel just the same as anybody else. There's nothing that's gonna stop you. You're not gonna – even if people hurl insults at you, you're protected by your own image of yourself. And so, I think, that, I don't know how I ever really got to that point. Maybe all of the things I've been talking about was – but I never saw myself as less than. And so as long as I was capable, and I could do what I wanted to, doors were not closed. Doors, you know, were open.

While most of the participants in the study communicated feeling aware of their differences related to their race or ethnicity, most told stories of only being indirectly affected by racialized language or treatment. On the other hand, every participant highlighted oppression and marginalization based on gender. In the words of one participant. Although Alejandra is adamant

that she rejects the idea of discrimination based on her race or ethnicity, her experiences related to gender oppression and marginalization are very different. For her undergraduate studies, she chose a field where more than 90 percent of her classmates were male. Her continued graduate studies and subsequent employment in this industry served to accentuate the disparate treatment of women in the workplace, especially related to compensation and pregnancy.

I've often been asked can I think back on being discriminated as a Latina, as a Hispanic, and I really can't. But as a woman, every day. Every day, especially in college, in work, and, today, as a [elected official] in the male-dominated [body of government.]

I had to keep my pregnancy kind of quiet from my employer. I didn't wear pregnancy clothes, you know, until about probably my fourth or fifth month. And then one of my coworkers, a woman, said, are you pregnant, you know. And at that point, it was very much of a discriminatory thing.

A guy was hired at \$5,000.00 more than I was, though, he came from a very small, very weak [undergraduate program]. Simply because he was a man. I was very aware that if I got pregnant, I'd get fired. It was understood that you paid women less because they could get pregnant, and then you could lose them. It was kind of the status quo at that time. And then also because I didn't have any maternity leave, I went into work, and I had planned on using my two-week vacation that I had. But my [baby] was early, almost like a month early. So I went into work on Friday, and [the baby] was born Saturday morning. So the only thing I could do was use my vacation for two weeks, and then come back to work. I mean, that's why, you know, I'm so much of a fighter for women's rights and that because – and I didn't even complain. There was nothing to complain about. There was nothing – There was no – there was no option. I could quit. There was no option.

Alejandra resigned herself to the reality that her employer could and would use her gender to justify terminating her employment. She took steps to conceal her pregnancy, and she limited her postpartum family leave to protect her job because she had no recourse against gender discrimination in the workplace. Alejandra compares these early career experiences to the environment she experiences as an elected official and sees little improvement.

Just, I think, a general attitude of not being as important as the men in ignoring your ideas, in ignoring, you have to speak up, because if not, your –. I mean, just entering the [body of government], for example, you see guys going to each other, "Oh, how are you? Hey, what was it last night," rah, rah. Walking right past a colleague that you know, perfectly well, is there to do the exact same thing that you're supposed to do, but you don't even have to say hello to them. You can ignore them, their existence. And that is

just infuriating because it is conditioned behavior. And it's rewarded behavior. Guys get a pump out of being this macho [makes a muscle gesture]. 'I want the okay from my fellow guys, but getting the okay from my fellow female colleagues is not important.' The discrimination against women, I think, is, again, a social construct, but it's pervasive in all males. [Laughter]. They see themselves as privilege. And they do have the privilege. Every time they get up in the morning, they see themselves in the mirror as men. And the world for men is open. It's their oyster, particularly in politics. That same strength that I felt of nobody can stop me is, I think, the same thing that men must feel. I'm a man. I'm entitled. And, therefore, imagined or real barriers don't stop them. Women, on the other hand, are forever in an environment where they are women. And we are naturally different. We don't have the social training/education to be as aggressive as men are.

I had to [be aggressive] if I was gonna survive. And I think there's something natural in women that I love, and that's our sense of humanity. We're much more empathetic to other people. We're much more concerned about the human situation. And that's a key difference that, to me, is an asset for us. And that's why we need more women in politics.

Pricilla's gendered experiences in college and graduate school echo Alejandra's feelings of frustration at the plight of women in male-dominated spaces. Driven by a desire to have the law school reflect the diversity of the surrounding area, her first year law school cohort included about a dozen Latino men and women and was the first time that the graduate program had ever accepted non-white students. She describes being one of eight women, and the only Latina. She thought that she being part of an affinity group of Latinos within a larger class of white students would create natural alliances. The reality was very different.

With the Anglo men, I didn't find that problem 'cause you needed to create study groups. And so the study group that I was in was all Anglo men and I'll tell you why in a minute. And so I didn't find them to be any way discriminatory.

My hardest problem was the Hispanic men. I was the only Hispanic woman and I was told right off you're only here to get a husband and so -yeah, a Hispanic male. He told me that. And so they also said, 'Well, my friend didn't get in because they had to bring you in.' And I said, 'Well obviously I did better grades than he did. Otherwise he would be here and I wouldn't be.' But I couldn't convince him. So they created their own study group. The Hispanic men [did]. They did not invite me to be part of their groups.

I found another group of [white] men who were very willing to have me be part. And so we were at the first semester all the Hispanic men were on probation. And I was passing the classes with B's. I think I had maybe one A. And so then [the Hispanic men] wanted to invite me to their study group. So I went to their study group. And one of the members of the study group turned out to be a [high ranking elected official] and he got

himself into a little bit of trouble and he went to prison. And so anyway, he was very involved in politics. I don't know how he had gotten a hold of the keys to the law library, but that's where these guys would go and study. But they didn't study.

They just gossiped and they did this and maybe they did a little study. They talked about a case. But then they would go about nine o'clock to a bar to drink. And so they invited me and I went – I just went I think one time to study with them and I just said no, I'm gonna go back to my other study group. I got good grades with this group. I don't know what is happening with this group.

The other issue was when the wives found out that I was part of the study group they got all upset because I was gonna take their men. And because I'm only in law school to find a husband [sarcasm]. So, it worked out well. They were getting into trouble with their wives and so it was better that I just [go back].

Her struggles to find alliances was not confined to her interactions with Latino and white men.

Her reflections on her treatment from white women included similar difficulty. Her white female classmates did not acknowledge the intersectional nature of challenges faced by Latinas.

The white women – I've always had issues with white women. And primarily because I'm a minority, our issues are different. The way I see our issues are very different because they will get a position where it will come to a minority male and then minority woman. And I could never get them to see that, that we were never gonna be on an equal plane. But pretty much the women at our law school weren't that well organized. There was one woman that was very interested in women's rights and equality and that was [Jane.] And so she latched onto me to be a good ally for her because then she would have a better argument because she's got the minority. So we got into it a little bit about "Are you using me as your token? Am I your equal? What is going on here?" And so she made it really clear. "Oh no, I wasn't looking at it that way." I felt that way in the beginning. What is my role here? What is going on? 'Cause I couldn't get her to understand, because then the men were really upset that I was with the women libbers and I was ignoring my roots. My racial roots. And of course, they would not understand that there was anything to the issue of women being treated differently. And so it was, [they felt I was betraying my] race. And so I was just sort of like, "deal with it. This is who I am." And so it came to be really kind of be an issue.

Estella's feelings of marginalization are not rooted in treatment from white women; rather, these feelings arise when her qualifications as a candidate are compared to that of a white woman who, in Estella's opinion, was underqualified for the office she is seeking.

My opponent, who kinda came out of nowhere, was just a housewife, a rich housewife, ran for [local office], which is a smaller jurisdiction than the [current campaign]. She served for [several] months and then quit to run for [higher office]. I served for 11 years and did all sorts of fighting corruption, like, expanding access to healthcare. I did all the

hard, freaking heavy lifting.

So when I was thinking about running for this [office], I met with the leaders of the business class and we were sitting there together, and they basically compared us as equals. They said, “You know, you and [your opponent] are both, you know, our two best community leaders and our best politicians.” I was like, “Say what?!”

And I remember, I was floored and I was offended and I pushed back and I said it’s very interesting to me that you all can say that when you’ve seen her in – at work for [a few] months. She’s never been tested, never had to deal with a – take a tough vote. She’s never been faced with a crisis because she hasn’t been in that long.

So I’m sorry, I guess I just don’t see that we are the equivalent of one another. And then at a later meeting, we had been meeting and it was a social setting and it was a smaller group, and I told them, ‘I am really deeply offended that you all compare me to [her].’

I later told two of my very close friends, who are Latino, who were in that meeting, when we were alone, I said it’s ‘cause she’s white. She gets far more credibility. You know, it’s so funny, I just think when they see a well put together, attractive white woman with her little scarf, who can – you know, who sounds articulate and, ooh, they’re impressed.

Susana’s experience with Latino men and women is similar to Pricilla and Alejandra, but hers is more complex because of her identity as an Afro-Latina. She explains that her tendency to identify as either Black or Latina is dependent on her audience and those with whom she interacts in a given situation. She is rarely able to embrace two cultures or two identities at once. She attributes many conflicts that she has experiences with her colleagues and her community to her multicultural perspective.

The Latina issue in [large cities] – no problem. When I lived in [large cities], you have Santo Domingo, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Cuba, but [here] they’re not as much accustomed to having a Latina that speaks Spanish and black or a mestiza of black and Latina, and, so, the difficulty – but when I first came here, I did not sense that I was even —I didn’t think about it being black or Spanish or black or Latina – [It depends on] who’s asking me the question and in what area am I and how is it going. For example, I was in [another city] last week and the issue in the was the reducing of [Black historical figures] from the history books. [A governmental] department says they have to take certain things out so they can have less time for testing and, so, those two items were being taken out. During this time, I am *una morena!* I am Black!

—and that conversation was I am black and I was against what they wanted to do. When I first came, I was in different associations – all Latinas – and I was doing everything with them and for them – meaning Latinos – because that’s how I grew up and that’s the group of people that I associated with; that’s the culture that I had, and in [large cities] and – because you find lots of blacks – people that look black and they’re Latinas

and it wasn't a problem, and when I came here, I was doing the same thing. I was the writer for the Hispanic newspaper in [my university] – yet I spent my time helping a lot of blacks, but I was always in groups of Latinos. When I moved to [this city], I was doing the same thing.

I would work with them and I would help them, I would do things in the community, to help with meetings, and all that stuff, and it was okay, but when I got elected and I looked around and I saw– there was only me – the only black elected in the [governing body] at that time, and I thought, look, the programs and the services to the black community, there was nobody voicing for them. They didn't have a voice, but Latinos Hispanos, they had everybody.

The blacks didn't have anything, so, I switched the role of what I was doing once I got elected. In the community, I was working with Latinos, doing everything, but once I got [elected], I decided to start helping the black people and that's how they came to know me. As a black woman. They didn't know me. I didn't associate with them. I didn't do anything with [the black community].

Susana's ability to adapt her behavior based on her peer group or a particular issue causes her to become the target of hostility and criticism from colleagues that she regarded as allies.

The ones who embraced me, they understood that I have two cultures and some of them who didn't embrace me considered me a Latina/black, but I wasn't black. The problem I have in this state is that you have blacks who don't consider me black and you have Hispanics that don't consider me Latina. The Spanish culture [where I'm from], you could have – you have blacks, you have Creole, you have la mescla, la morenita, and you have the white, and you have – and we're all one.

She relates an especially tumultuous incident in which she was confronted by a Latina colleague. The situation grew extensive criticism from the Latino community who accused her of being disloyal and racist toward Latinos rooted in her black identity; however, the black community supported and protected her in the midst of the controversy. Finally, Susana expresses her regret at how difficult it is to navigate two cultures in a community where she is considered an outside by nearly everyone. White women and men also demonstrated behavior that caused Susana to feel marginalized politically.

You know, white women – you know where they're coming from. You know there's prejudice there. White men – you know there's prejudice there. So, you expect it and you work against it. You don't expect it from another person of color and that's when it's the hardest.

[Among my colleagues], men in general – Hispanos and Anglos – no matter what – So, the men in general look at who you are – the levels. Example – [a man in a leadership position]. He and I served. We were office mates. I was the one that sat on the committee for 20 years and should've been given the position of chair and he gave it to the white woman instead of me – a white woman who had never sat on [that] committee – and I told him to his face, “You picked the white woman over me.” He was very angry about that because he didn't feel that he had done that, and I think indirectly he didn't see himself doing that, but he did.

This type of political reprisal was cited by several of the participants in the study. Some articulated concern that their gender was a motivating factor for political attacks and active measures to undermine their effectiveness and authority. These tactics are manifested in the form of verbal confrontations, politically motivated actions intended to marginalize the women, and sexual harassment.

Carmen tells of a traumatic clash with a colleague and his staff related over a common work project. After a conflict about the project arose between Carmen and her male colleague, his office engaged Carmen's staff in an unruly meeting wherein they were subjected to a gender-based harangue about Carmen and her inability to subjugate herself to a male colleague.

So what happened was [his staff], called in [my staff], and apparently went behind closed doors, and they yelled at [them] yelling in a room like this, telling them, you know, just really unprofessional [and then] they then switched it to attacking [me], and apparently they said, you know, [that] they made me, I am where I am because of them. That my success was due to them, that they needed to learn how to control me, that the [leadership] were playing me [because the male colleague and leadership] had been best friends, they would not hide anything from him. That essentially I needed to be controlled and that I owed everything to [him].

But we had already had issues with [his office], because [they] would call my staff demanding things and I would say no, and I would say you all don't work for him. And it got to a point that I said, “You all can start defending yourself, I will have your back.” He needs to – he doesn't have any respect for any [of my colleagues]. And when I – I went and called [another colleague] to talk to him and he said he was going through the same thing. His [staff] is a female too, same thing. And so [another colleague], same thing, his [staff], female, same thing. So it's, you know –.

Carmen relates another story of being excluded from a legislative discussion despite her expertise and position. Excluding Carmen from this process led to the failure of legislation.

So one of the things that I find interesting is there was – I am the only [local] member on the committee, so you would naturally assume that any [related] bills that [effect the local area], they would give them to me because I'm on the committee and I can push 'em out faster. So then there comes this bill and [it is given to a man] and I don't understand why when [this issue] is not his deal. He is on [other committees], and we had this discussion, but what ends up happening, another committee member filed the same identical bill. But I'm kinda like - what the hell? It failed.

Finally, Carmen describes the culture of sexual harassment that pervades the institution in which she serves. She provides examples of constant comments received by various male colleagues.

We can be at a [group] dinner or [during the work day] and [someone] comes in and says, you just say the word and I'll leave my wife for you. Or, "You look like a 10 today." "I can't concentrate with you wearing that dress." Never physically touched me.

Just like these guys can do it, but I will never, ever cross a line, I will never degrade myself, I will never – there is a fine line, and sometimes it could be, you know – I've noticed sometimes when I sit down with an older male member for coffee and I'll say, hey, I need to talk to you about this bill, and sometimes it could be a smile, acting like a daughter with them, stroking their ego, and I [persuade them]. I will never let them think that I will cross a line with them in terms of having sex with them, having a happy hour, one on one, with them, going to dinner with them. To me, it's like opening yourself up to crossing the line, like, "Will you come have a drink with me.?" Like a date. I've had a [male colleague] say "When are you and I gonna have dinner together," I said, oh, and – he's like, "What do I have to do to have you have dinner with me.?" I said, "Invite my [female colleague], invite a bunch of – I think we can have a group of women, we can all have dinner with together."

Let me make myself clear, I can have – like, I can have dinner with [other male colleagues] one on one. I can have dinner with, you know, a lot of the male [colleagues] one on one, but there's certain ones that are asking me and I know what their true intent is.

She reiterates that the harassment is not isolated to a few. The behavior is accepted and perpetuated by many, including staff and elected officials.

[A member of my staff] told me she had gone to one of my colleagues' offices, a very good friend of mine, very good friend of mine, and she goes, "My God, that staff, it's like a boys' club in there." I said, "Well, what happened?" I can't believe – she goes, "They have a list, they rank the female [elected officials] according to how they – who they want to sleep with. You're number one and [another female colleague] is number two and they said the only reason that you're number one is because [she] is too nice and they would want like a dominatrix and that's why you're number one."

And then I've had a [colleague] tell me, amongst the [male colleagues], they're like, "You know, you're our number one you're still our – we rank our..." Like they rank their female colleagues according to like who is the hottest, who they want get with. He

told me –. I just looked at him and just like – I tell him; I roll my eyes like get out of here. It irritates me, because here I am. I'm working, I'm trying to get things done and this is what you come and tell me.

Although Pricilla has never been the direct recipient of overt sexual harassments, she shares her knowledge of others' harassment. She explains that gender oppression usually took the form of misogynistic stereotyping, but other women were, at times, reluctant to continue to serve in public office because of the treatment to which they were subjected.

They would more say things – well, I don't know. "We know how you girls are, I hope you don't cry, this is really hard stuff." But not so much more on a sexual personal basis. They weren't grabbing us or expecting – I know for [those in another branch] though it is. I know that I've heard some of our women [elected officials] who had talked about men expecting sexual favors, showing up at their doorstep at their hotel room because they're expecting them to be invited in.

I'm not so sure about staffers, but [elected officials]. One Hispanic [female elected official] in particular basically said she was not gonna run because of that because she just could not take it. She was just tired of saying no and nobody taking her serious. Even getting the door slammed in your face, and then the repercussions of that afterwards for her bills and what she was doing and she says no, I'm not gonna play that game.

When asked to reflect on the lack of Latina representation in elected bodies because of sexual harassment, she replies:

Oh, it's devastating because you have nobody there – we finally have gotten that our voice needs to be heard. But then this is their way of silencing that voice, by treating them so badly that they're not going to be there to be the voice. And it's not just the voice – To be one of the ones that are voting to actually make things happen. And so it's tremendously frustrating in that regard to how – and we made so much progress and it's been little as it is. And then now this huge step backwards.

Julia offers the only dissenting description of her treatment in her appointed position.

This is very interesting. Never. Never did I feel that because I was a woman that I was relegated to certain tasks. In fact, in [my appointed position] what you find is the work is so challenging that you want the most qualified best person to be by your side you don't care what they are what they look like you just need the most qualified individual. And sometimes it's a man, but sometimes it's an elderly person. It was never "You're a woman, maybe you shouldn't go [on assignment] by yourself or to [on assignment]." It was always, "You're the most qualified, you gotta go." That's just the way it is.

None of the women recalled having been directly affected by overt racism, but some could point to racialized language or subtle implications of racial bias. At least two described their fathers' experiences of racial discrimination as events having significant impact on their own worldviews. In contrast, all of but one of the women felt the effects of gender discrimination on a daily basis in their personal and professional lives. Manipulation of committee assignments and sexual harassment were common behaviors intended to marginalize these women, and this oppression was perpetrated by white men, Latino men, white women, and in one instance, another Latina.

Creating Meaning from Racial, Gendered and Cultured Experiences

All of the women in this study were asked to reflect their lives and careers in hindsight and to offer an assessment of their motivations for pursuing this professional path, learned lessons, and advice they would offer to other women who aspire to elected or appointed positions. Each spoke of personal and professional challenges and have each declared a willingness to continue in their chosen career despite any trauma they have felt due to oppression and discrimination. The stories of the Latinas demonstrate a commitment to social justice and altruism rooted in their own or their families' experiences of marginalization. Specifically, the women voiced concern for protecting those who had no voice to advocate on their own behalf. Carmen recalls having been motivated to pursue a career in law with the specific intent of being an advocate for vulnerable and disenfranchised. Her own father's maltreatment contributed to her motivation.

I have always had this quality or desire to always be a voice for the little guy. I went to law school to do that. I did it with the purpose of becoming a judge one day. That's really what my dream was to be on a bench and its funny how things work out... My father's so talented and he taught himself to bring in money and then get screwed. I think hearing that always played in the back of my mind how people are screwed and they need someone to fight for them.

Carmen also reflected on her personal journey and why she feels driven to pursue a career in public service. As he describes it, her spouse expressed support as her political aspirations but became resentful as she became more successful and more independent. She attributes her subsequent separation and divorce as an impetus to a lead a life of self-sufficiency and self-care.

When I left, I started from scratch, I left everything behind. I literally picked up my furniture and clothes and left everything.

[He] said he was committed and supportive of what I wanted to do but when it came down to it, I think that he didn't like the attention I was getting and I think for him, he wanted to be like the head of the household, I don't know how to articulate it but he did he got threatened by it and I think it contributed a big part of it.

My solution to that, I had already accepted at that point that this is what I want to do with my life. I was very upfront with him. This was the dream that I had, and I was not gonna have any regrets and not live my life. You're not going to let me live my life and be me. I'm gonna be miserable in that marriage. It's not fair. I supported him and helped him be what he wanted to be, and that wasn't gonna be in return. I knew I was going to be angry, and I was going to reject him and it wasn't going to work anyway.

That's why I think as with any marriage that ends and it's sad and its hard, I know I tried to work at it, but I knew at the end of the day that it wasn't gonna work out but I knew I had to a take care of myself and my future.

The only time I question and I say, "What the hell and I doing?" is when I see stupid bills being voted on and knowing that there's not enough [political support] to stop bad stuff. That's when I'm like, "Why am I here?" But never because of these personal experiences I have had. I mean, I think I'm there for a reason, and I love what I do, and I love policy making. To freaking make a change. In policy. To open doors for other women. But I really love the policy part, like having – changing the law, trying to make things better, having an effect, that's why I love what I do.

Similarly, Estella saw marginalization in her community targeting fellow Latinos, and she was inspired to organize with the intent of protecting those vulnerable to racism, discrimination, and potential deportation. This was her introduction to political activity that ultimately led her to run for office. She expresses frustration with having to confront other American-born Latinos who were the source of oppression for Latino immigrants.

I got connected politically because there was some xenophobia happening at the time in [my hometown] that was very alarming and offensive to me, and I was very offended by that so I got involved with groups that were fighting that. And got pulled in to – served on [the board of a local nonprofit]. Eventually they hired me as co-coordinator and we

would teach the undocumented about their rights when confronted by [law enforcement]. We did a lot of community education around immigration and the positives of immigration. We really tried to change the narrative. So I would [work at my day job] and I would do a lot of this stuff on weekends and by night.

[I did this] because, to me, it was contrary to our community values. We were a binational community made up of immigrants, made up of – I felt there was incredible hypocrisy coming from folks who were advocating for strong border enforcement, who were children of immigrants. You know, instead of advocating for changing laws that made it difficult, there were a lot of people wanting to just shut the door on others. And so I felt it was unfair, I felt it was unjust, I felt it was inhumane, not compassionate.

Pricilla's motivation to run for office reflect the same sense of social justice that moved Carmen and Estella. Pricilla's observed elected officials, especially in the judiciary, wielding tremendous power and influence. This power could be used to empower and protect vulnerable persons just as easily as it could be used to marginalize them.

So, in law school I would get so frustrated. I would read these cases, and *I* would think that the result would be the exact opposite because it was a poor person or somebody was disadvantaged being harmed by this, and it could be really easily changed, and you could really interpret it the law way. But these were judges, and these were these opinions that were being written. And [my motivation to run for office] was more when I was practicing in my clinical program and had more experience in judges in the courtrooms.

And so I thought the judges are the ones that have all the power. You know how these lawyers get in there and argue with the judges. And so I thought, hmm. So I graduated and mom comes up to me and she's so happy. "You fulfilled your dreams." Now you're gonna go be a lawyer. For mom, me being a lawyer was - a lawyer was gonna make money. And I was gonna be out there making all these kinds of money and everything. And so that wasn't the kind of lawyer I wanted to be anyway. And I said mom –

[Before graduation], I wanted to be a lawyer that helped people and did criminal work and I wanted to work for legal aid (laughs). And so I told mom before graduation, I says mom, I want to be [an elected official]. And she says okay, mija. Okay. And I says, "I'll have to run for office, mom, so stay involved in politics."

Susana reflects on her accomplishments that she has achieved in service to others. Her identity as an Afro-Latina alienates her from the Latino community, and she laments the lack of recognition that she receives from Latino establishment leaders for her efforts to support Latino interests. In spite of this, she remains steadfast in her commitment to both the black and Latino constituents. Her explanation is also founded in the belief that this was her purpose in seeking elected office.

The good that I do. The good that comes out of the little bit [of recognition] that I get. The good – for me to help senior citizens – the good – for example, I passed the legislation that [helps] Latinos, immigrants [a benefit] that only went to citizens of the United States. I fought like from midnight to like four in the morning, arguing against [the other party] that we shouldn't do it versus we should do it, and why we should do it for these kids that grew up in America, went to school here, and got their education, and then when they get out of high school, they can't get to college. And, so, I won, and the kids that are immigrants from children can now get the [financial support] just like everybody else. That is what keeps me going. That is what tells me I'm doing something right in America. That's what I came here for.

Just as the dissolution of Carmen's marriage was a defining moment that convinced her to remain faithful to her sense of purpose and self-actualization, Daniela came to this awareness while working in her first professional job after graduating from college. Where she had previously thought that law school and elected office was out of reach, seeing a law student from her hometown gave her the encouragement that she needed to seek her own path in law.

My boss said that I had when I was [in my first career], when I told him that I want to go to law school, he said, "Well, you know, if you're if you're going just because you want to make more money, you're not going to necessarily make more money." And I said, "You know really, the money doesn't have anything to do with it." Money didn't even enter my mind when I decided I want to go to law school. That's something I never remember desiring. "Do I want to be rich?"

I reached a point where I didn't feel a real sense of fulfillment, and what I was doing on a day-in and day-out basis? I can remember sitting in traffic, going to work thinking, "You know, what purpose am I serving? Yeah, I do a good job, but who cares whether these books balance or not?" It was a good job and a good company, so I remember thinking I can either change jobs or I can change careers, and what could I do?

Another funny story going back to college to show how clueless I was. I remember sitting on the shuttle bus system, and the law school students would get on and off and in those days, they had huge books. [I was] thinking that they had to be geniuses, and law school is not something I even thought that, at my level, that I could ever do, you know. I never even considered it, and so fast forward now to, I'm in [a different city] and had my second [child]. Trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and a good friend of mine is an attorney here in [my current city]. He's originally from [my hometown], and he was in law school and I thought, "If [he] can go to law school (laughs), I can go to law school. He's smart, but he's not a genius (laughs)." I could relate to him.

[In law school], I knew I wanted to help people, and I knew I wanted to do something that was going to make a difference, and so at the time, I said legal aid. And within the first job that I got, as a third-year law school was with a lawyer that

represented plaintiffs, and did workers comp and personal injury, so that was the first type of law practice I was exposed to, and I liked it. It's kind of been part of my nature is to help people or defend people.

Alejandra career began locally, and when asked to reflect on what her work has meant in her life, she cited children and immigrants as her highest priorities. She emphasizes her gratitude for having been the recipient of an excellent education in the United States when she was one of the only Latino students in her class; however, the minority population of that same school district has increased significantly over the years. Her initial stimulus to pursue elected office was borne out of the realization that black and Latino children were being marginalized by the system that was designed to serve mostly wealthy, Anglo students.

Here was the school system that prepared me so well, where I got excellent education, allowed me to become a [successful in my career]. And all of a sudden, because you have now brown kids [in the school district], whose parents don't know how to read and write. They don't bathe every day, into an environment that continues thinking that it's 98 percent White.

And, all of a sudden, these kids are beginning to fail, and getting a second-class education. That was the – I get motivated when I get angry. And I was furious at seeing that happen. There was a huge decline in SAT scores for Black and Latinos. I got very much involved, pushing the system to say you need to look at what's happening to these kids. We're able to get them to do a two-year study. And that got me involved with the election.

I really realized there was no Latino having a voice for all of these kids. And, you know, I looked at the [school board], and I said, well, they're just like me. I had two hands and two feet. There's nothing special about it.

In addition to her desire to address the lack of equity in the school district, Alejandra's motivation to serve is also influenced by the larger, national political discourse, especially as it pertains to immigration enforcement and policy in the United States.

No. I'm [older]. It's a miracle that I'm running for this. It's just because Trump wouldn't let me sit back. And do what? Sit back and watch people. I know too much. I think I can be of service, especially now, we've had term limits for the first time, and there's a gazillion people running, people with no experience. People that just think, yeah, I'm gonna go in there, and be able to change every single issue.

I'm not superficial. I'm not self-interested either. I usually am fighting for somebody else. [Starts to cry]. And then there's no holding back if you really care about what needs to happens. And right now with our Latino community under such threats,

they need a champion who's gonna stand up for them. So that's what gives me confidence.

And that's why I admire [Latino immigrants] so much. I never had to walk, you know, 10 days, come across the border in inhuman conditions. Be here naked. Work two or three jobs. Be humiliated. Be treated badly. That's just not right.

Julia's reflection on her life and career also focused on advocacy for children and helping them realize their full potential. A sense of confidence and fearlessness was instilled in her at an early age, and it served her well throughout her life. Julia's words describe her desire for everyone, especially children, find the path they are meant to pursue. She acknowledges that this path might not be obvious or evident at first, but with persistence, will come to fruition. She tries to personally influence those around her, when possible.

I think it's so important to imbue in our children, and not just our flesh and blood children, but *all* children that we can influence and talk to and have an influence over—how very courageous they are, and how they can be courageous. It's in them. They just need to find it and call on it when it's necessary, it's just so important because I know what it feels like to grow up with that sense of confidence. And I see so many people, men and women, that just don't have [confidence]. And I every time I can get a word in with someone I perceive can do something, but doesn't want to try, but they are afraid to fail.

There's no such thing as failure. My husband says that all the time. No such thing as failure because it's re-direction into something that you're going to be successful at. Why would you keep doing something you're failing at? No. But you don't know you're going to fail until you try. And once you try, and it doesn't work, then you move to something that does work.

It's a tremendous lesson. Do not be afraid to try something that might disappoint you because it didn't work out the way *you* wanted, but embrace that, and learn from that. And I say that for, like, people who want to be governor, and they don't become governor, and they probably will never run again for governor, maybe governor was really not meant, you can do more good in something else.

We really need individuals who see what justice needs to be done in this world. Some of us now that are out of the limelight or out of the influence area, can still do our part by voting, by encouraging others to vote, to put people in office, by lecturing. We need to be there for the younger generation. Let them know that there's a whole world out there for them and they can make it better.

Despite differences related to age, socioeconomic status, years in office, or offices held,

the women in the study are joined in the common cause of the pursuit of social justice and motivated by a sense of altruism. Each of the women could describe a specific instance where

they felt compelled to be a voice for vulnerable persons, and that moment provided the motivation to run for office or to pursue public service. Many spoke of a light-bulb moment spurred on by witnessing injustice and wanting to rectify it.

This chapter presented the testimonios of Latinas who have been elected or appointed to office and who have committed their careers to public service. The participants' words in this chapter are a straightforward and, sometimes disturbing, account of Latinas are treated and the circumstances that shape their lives. First, the women describe how their career trajectories are influenced by their gender and family relationships. Secondly, the themes that emerge from the testimonios of these women revealed oppression, discrimination, and marginalization occurs in many forms and throughout many instances of their personal and professional lives. Finally, the women recounted the importance of social justice and altruism as primary motivators for pursuing a life of service. The women did not have identical experiences, and some even described divergent opinions and beliefs related to the research questions. The following chapter will include a discussion of the themes presented in these findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Discussion

Why I Conducted This Study

The genesis of this study began with my own tentative aspirations related to running for political office. I had long heard rumors and gossip about the treatment of women in my own professional networks, and I had also seen newspaper accounts of this behavior in bodies of government outside of my own state. These stories were often salacious and supported the trope of leering, misogynistic, white male politicians preying on female colleagues with impunity, but were often dismissed as tabloid journalism and often denied by the men accused. The decision to conduct this study was solidified after careful interrogation of literature related to leadership, political science, education, and gender studies and found a gap relative to the lived experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office. At the same time, I explored a methodology that could adequately address the individual stories of the women while also narrating a powerful collective experience. Testimonios as a methodology provides a platform to amplify each woman's voice while also lifting up their voices in the aggregate to tell a common story (Huber, 2009). Similarly, Zimmerman explicates that the collective nature of testimonio is characterized by its "intertextual dialogue of voices, reproducing but also creatively reordering historical events in a way which impresses as representative and true and which projects a vision of life and society in need of transformation." (1995, p.12). The voices of the women in this study tell a cohesive story about the centrality of the family unit in Latino culture, oppression and marginalization suffered in personal and professional settings, and how meaning is constructed from these lived experiences.

Discussion of the Findings

Smith (2010) presents testimonio as means of resistance against patriarchal and controlling institutions, governments, and political regimes. Yúdice (1991) describes testimonio as “an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of the situation (e.g. war, oppression, revolution, etc.)” (p. 17). Specifically, testimonio can be offered in many forms of narrative discourse including the personal interviews utilized in this study (Smith, 2010). The testimonios of the Latinas in this study represent diverse perspectives, but they also encapsulate a common experience. Their stories reveal a narrative that resists the male-dominated culture common in bodies of government and inspired by an urgency to expose oppression.

Research procedures outlined in Chapter 3 described the process of constant comparative analysis that allowed themes to emerge from the testimonios of the participants. Each of the participants was unique in geographic location, age, family structure, immigration status/story, country of origin, number of years in public service, nationality, and family relationships. While these differences provide variation among the testimonios, they also create a well-rounded and robust account of the lives of Latinas in public service. This account is consistent with the purpose and function of testimonio in that these findings give voice to women who cannot otherwise speak freely for fear of political retribution and social alienation. connected by the goal of illuminating a common experience (Beverley, 2004).

I present the findings in Chapter 4 as they relate to three research questions. The LatCrit theoretical framework guided the creation of the interview protocol and the research questions. In turn, these questions provided the frame within which I organized the emerging themes. The findings support the notion that Latinas are influenced by the traditional cultural values of

familismo and marianismo. In addition, their personal and professional experiences in male-dominated spaces are shaped by their racial and gender identities. In this chapter, I will review each research question and the associated findings that support the LatCrit theoretical framework and the notion of testimonio as a means of resistance (Smith, 2010).

Research question #1. What are the gendered, racial, and cultured experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office, if any?

Gendered, racial, and cultured experiences manifested in many ways in the lives of the Latinas in the study. Many of the women cited cultural values such as faith/religiosity, honor, respect, and a commitment to a strong work ethic, but the centrality of the family unit and their role within it was a common and important theme in the findings cited in Chapter 4. This strong sense of closeness and kinship is known as familismo and is considered a priority among Latino families. Support for the immediate and extended family can take on many forms. Physical and emotional proximity are a way of demonstrating familismo, and the words of the study participants indicated that this proximity, and sometimes the lack of it, impacted their lives. The most prevalent theme related to familismo emerged as the participants described their educational trajectories and their parents support for it. Whether their families were wealthy, middle-class, or of lower socioeconomic status, their parents consistently encouraged them to pursue higher education as a way to better themselves or for the betterment of the family. Parents, especially mothers, often cited a lack of opportunity and the limitations of the traditional female gender role within Latino families as motivation to go to college or to finish a graduate degree. They told stories of mothers and fathers who regretted not completing their own educations and how this regret planted a seed of determination that grew into a path to degree completion. Figure 4 illustrates the manifestation of these cultural values in daily life.

Even as the women were being encouraged to pursue college degrees, familismo and the traditional role of women continued to define expectations for their behavior and responsibilities within the family. Girls were expected to cook, clean, care for children and to remain subservient, while boys were sent to work outside the home. The women did not view these expectations as oppressive; rather, gender roles were seen as the manner in which girls could and should contribute to the family's success and cohesion. Even as they advanced in their own careers and created their own families, many adhered to these traditional roles in their households.


Latinas	Cultural Values	Manifestation
	Familismo	Contribution to the success of the family
	Marianisma	Physical and emotional proximity to family
	Faith	Traditional gender roles; women and girls as caretakers/homemakers
	Honor	Value of Education
	Respect	
Strong Work Ethic		

Figure 4. Centrality of Latino cultural values and their manifestation in life.

Research question #2. What do testimonios of Latinas and elected office reveal about oppression and marginalization of Latinas in elected and appointed office, if any?

Latinas in the study were the targets for oppression and marginalization in their personal lives, during college and graduate school, on the campaign trail, and while in office. Treatment by white women, white men, and Latino men contributed to their feelings of marginalization.

Some of the study participants identified instances of racialized language and cited instances where they felt that they had been denied opportunities that were later given to white

women, but none characterized these incidents as overt racism or incidences where they felt that they were the victims of racial discrimination. At least two Latinas described overt racial discrimination suffered by their fathers as motivating influences in their careers. Racialized language was often directed at other people or couched in political rhetoric, but the study participants did not feel personally victimized by it.

Alejandra and Julia were the only participants who explicitly denied the ideas of marginalization based on race and argued that this is a self-imposed phenomenon. They assert that Latinos either fall into a pattern of self-victimization or they lack persons in their lives who express confidence or belief in their abilities. Specifically, Julia received near constant reinforcement that she could and should accomplish anything she desired, and consequently, she never felt barriers related to her race or her gender. Alejandra agree with this thinking, but she emphasized that she felt marginalized by her gender on a daily basis.

Many of the other participants agreed with the declaration that women in male-dominated spaces in higher education, in the workplace, and in bodies of government are often the victims of sexism, misogyny, and harassment. Notable examples include salary inequities, risk of losing a job due to pregnancy, being excluded from study groups and legislative committees, and being passed over for election in favor of an unqualified candidate who is white woman or a white male.

Susana's experience was the most disparate experience compared to the others in the study. Her identity as an Afro-Latina caused significant challenges for her in both the black and Latino communities in which she worked. Although she happily identifies as a Latina, she felt isolated from other Latinos because of the color her skin. The black community in her area was underrepresented in her body of government, and they welcomed her as a champion for their

issues. She described a particularly troubling incident where she was attacked politically by a fellow Latina based on the color of her skin and ignored her Latina identity. She concluded that, although she identifies as Afro-Latina, she will sometimes either refer to herself as “black” or “Latina,” depending on her audience.

Similar to racial discrimination, sexual harassment was an oppressive and marginalizing influence of which the participants were aware but not necessarily subject to. With the exception of Carmen, they described hearing stories and related instances of sexual harassment that affected others but did not identify as victims of sexual harassment. Carmen provided the most unequivocal examples of sexualized language and behavior from her male colleagues. In addition, her testimonio provided evidence of a culture of sexualized language and behavior in the body of government in which she serves.

In summary, these oppressive forces were perpetrated by white men, white women, and Latino men in a variety of contexts. These findings support the notion that Latinas are subjected to maltreatment or marginalizing behavior based on their gender and race, and at times, a combination of both. LatCrit theorizes that Latinas experience institutions of power in different ways based on critical variables, such as race, gender, language, or socioeconomic status. Furthermore, Chicana feminism, coupled with intersectionality, holds that these Latinas are oppressed and marginalized based on the intersection of multiple variables and from white and Latino men, as well as white women. Crenshaw et al. (1995) write that the purpose of intersectionality is to seek to determine how the difference in a woman effects the way she experiences relationships with counterparts of other races and gender. Figure 5 illustrates how the findings in this study demonstrated “what difference her difference made.”




Latinas	Difference	Counterpart	Result
	Gender	Latino/Chicano/Hispanic Men	Race Traitor, Sexism (Oppression)
	Race	White Women	Tokenism, Racism, Microaggression (Oppression)
	Race and Gender	White Men	Sexism, Racism, Microaggression, Harassment (Oppression)

Figure 5. Differences and oppression. Differences between Latinas and their gendered and racial counterparts and the resulting form of oppression.

The experience of the participants in this study confirm that, when they took up the cause of feminism with white female allies, they were seen as traitors to their Latino race by Latino men. This response from Latino men failed to acknowledge the Latinas' gender and the oppression that they might feel as women in male-dominated environments. Rather, these men prioritized the Latinidad of women instead of gender. Similarly, when Latinas championed causes relevant to their Latino identity in solidarity with their Latino male counterparts, they felt isolated from the interests of white women. Additionally, white women often recruited Latinas as allies in feminist causes to give the impression that their actions were supported by Latinas; and therefore, the cause was perceived to be more credible and universally beneficial to women. These actions cause the study participants to feel tokenized in that their inclusion was only symbolic and superficial. Their perception of the Latinas was that the white women sought to avoid being accused of lack of intersectionality. Finally, many of the Latinas described being overlooked by white men for professional promotion and committee assignments in favor of lesser qualified white women with little experience. The testimonios of the women in this study

reported sexualized language and objectification by white men and described a culture of sexual harassment in white male dominated institutions of government. These experiences support the notion of triple oppression of Latinas caused by sexism, imperialism, and racism. These experiences are grounded at the intersection of LatCrit and Chicana feminism and revealed by their testimonios.

Research question #3. How do Latinas create meaning from gendered and racial experiences in their lives?

Finally, the testimonios of the study participants reveal the purpose and motivations for seeking a career in public office in spite of their experiences related to discrimination, oppression, and marginalization. The Latinas all recognized a calling to service, social justice, and altruism, especially for vulnerable persons who could not defend themselves from inequity or unfairness.

In some instances, the women recalled family members who had been abused or exploited. A common theme among the testimonios was the need to fight for the “little guy,” the “underdog,” and they endeavored to speak up for persons who had no voice. As I employed constant comparative data analysis (Glaser, 1965), the emergence of this theme was intriguing to me. The act of employing testimonio is to give voice to those who are not able to tell their own stories (Huber, 2009); the women whose stories I seek to elevate view themselves as advocates for the voiceless. They view their work, on behalf of their constituents, as form of vindication for the wrongs they have witnessed in their personal and professional lives.

The testimonios also revealed an awareness of the elevated and privileged position that elected and appointed office provides. Many described themselves being extremely naïve in their early careers and cited specific examples of how they learned from election losses, political

maneuvering, failed marriages, and the challenges of balancing motherhood with career. Hindsight and wisdom gained from these lived experiences while navigating male-dominated and Anglo power dynamics, institutions of government, and family relationships gave the women a sense of self-confidence that they are inclined to share with others. They see themselves as role models with the ability to use their personal experiences to teach others to avoid difficulties and to take proactive measure to guard against ill treatment.

Figure 6 represents the complex interpretation of what could be considered marginalizing forces based on the testimonios created by the women in the study. The collective story of the Latinas articulates a struggle to reconcile their positionality in the family versus that in the workplace. Additionally, these women have achieved an understanding of the balance between their role in the family unit and their professional roles. They are very comfortable with circumstances of home and family even when they could be construed as relegating women and girls to a traditional gender role. This role is a source of pride and responsibility that is welcomed and appreciated by the study participants. The role of wife, mother, daughter, sister illustrates how marianismo lends strength to the structure of the family.

The burden of carrying the oppressive and marginalizing influence of sexism, racism, and discrimination affects the Latinas in professional spaces. Gender discrimination and sexism in the form was most commonly cited as the heaviest to bear but nearly all recognized that racism indirectly affected their careers to a lesser extent. The women are able to navigate these opposing forces informed by their own sense of cultural and professional intuition. In their personal lives, their cultural values and gender identity is a sustaining asset. In the workplace, these same attributes are sometimes weaponized and used as a mechanism to marginalize them.

The collective story created by the women in this study tell a story of two distinct experiences, that of the family and that of the workplace, that exist simultaneously while supported by a foundation rooted in the concepts of social justice. The testimonios revealed that the women acknowledge having been called to action by witnessing vulnerable persons being marginalized or mistreated. Over time, these experiences solidified a sense of purpose and motivation to pursue careers in public service.



Figure 6. The illustrated collective testimonio of Latinas in elected and appointed office.

Implications of the Study

Creating meaning from testimonios. The testimonios of the women in this study reveal barriers and challenges and provide a roadmap for young or emerging Latinas leaders to navigate the complex road paved by their predecessors. As the Latino presence in the United States

increases, the collective potential to influence American society increases. As greater numbers of Latinas exercise their right to vote, political scientists believe that identity politics becomes more significant among Latinos. Literature related to voter behavior predicts that most people will choose a candidate that best represents the interests and values most important to them. However, the make-up of local, state and federal government does not reflect the shift in demographics that has been in process or that is predicted to occur in the coming decades (Bejarano, 2013). Because of this, the testimonios of the women are very important representations of non-dominant, minority voices. The idea that these women could create meaning from their lived experiences when given the opportunity to give voice to racial and gendered oppression that they have experienced. Theirs is a rarified experience that should become more commonplace if Latina leadership keeps pace with the expected growth of this ethnic group as expected by the year 2060. This study has contributed to the understanding of personal and professional lived experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office. The study participants articulated purpose and meaning in their professional lives based on their childhoods, family relationships, and educational journeys. The collective experience revealed by testimonio indicates that Latinas who aspire to a career in the public sector share common cultural values that can aid and inform their own professional trajectories. Similarly, the common experiences of oppression validate the anecdotal perception that Latinas are marginalized at the intersection of their race and gender but are most likely to experience oppression related to gender.

Theoretical implications. Collins and Bilge (2016) present a framework for intersectionality as an analytic tool and is applicable to these findings as they relate to the power dynamics experienced by the Latinas in this study. LatCrit theorizes that Latinas experience systems

of power differently based on race, ethnicity, gender, language, immigration and socioeconomic status, or any intersection of these. Chicana feminism asserts that these Latinas are subject to oppression at the intersection of racism, imperialism, and sexism, and often from white women, white men, and even Latino men (Martínez, 1995) Intersectionality as an analytic tool describes the interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural, and structural domains of power. Interpersonal relates to how people disadvantaged in social interactions, and disciplinary relates to which rules apply and are implemented based on differences. The cultural domain of power is concerned with how inequity and justice are defined and by whom, while structural domains of power describe how large institutions are organized in order to perpetuate disparity in interpersonal, disciplinary, and cultural domains of power (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

The testimonios of the women in this study elucidate intersectional struggles, based on critical variables defined by LatCrit, related to gender and race in personal and professional settings. Furthermore, their collective narrative supports the assertion that inequity and injustice are defined by those in power. Specifically, in various situations, white men and Latino men positioned themselves as arbiters of justice in many interactions with Latinas in professional contexts. To a lesser degree, white women yielded power over Latinas but were often advantaged when considering qualifications and career advancement. Latinas were subject to sexist maltreatment in the workplace based on their race and gender and suffered dehumanizing sexual harassment by men in power. The very low number of women, especially Latinas, in elected and appointed office limits their power to hold men accountable for their actions and create lasting change. Their testimonios as resistance literature has the potential to disrupt accepted power structures within bodies of government (Thomas & Davies, 2005).

Electoral representation and policy implications. Larger implications exist for electoral representation of the Latino population in the United States. Based on the U.S. Census (2010), Latinos are the fastest growing and the largest minority group in the United States. Latinos have long held majority-minority status in many areas of the southern United States, but are now rapidly increasing in numbers in southeastern states such as Virginia, North Carolina, and Virginia. Further growth in Latino population is expected to occur in states where, traditionally, Latinos have not made up a majority of the population (Peralta & Larkin, 2011). The testimonios of the Latinas in this story indicate a strong desire to represent the interests of the Latino community, especially where race, gender, and socioeconomic status create vulnerability. As the constituency of Latinos grows in the U.S., elected and appointed representation becomes important in order to address legislative and policy issues, such as immigration and social and economic inequity, that disproportionately affect Latinos.

Methodological Contributions

As I created the research design for this study, I referred to the work of others who have employed testimonio as a methodology to understand the experiences of Latinas (Huber, 2009; Bernal, et. al., 2009). Like Huber, who attributes the development of her Chicana feminist epistemology to the influences of Burciaga (2007), my own viewpoint was informed by their previous research that employed this frame and was guided by LatCrit. This guidance allowed me to identify my own location in the process as the first instrument of the research process allowed me to trust in innate cultural intuition and recognize patterns and themes within the data to accurately interpret and represent the lives of the Latinas. Testimonio literature has been used as a tool to resistance to a dominant narrative that oppresses non-dominant groups like Latinas in elected office. This study demonstrates how the alignment of testimonio and this theoretical

approach as a means of conducting social justice research. Lastly, the use of constant comparative analysis and an iterative process used to analyze testimonio data supported the credibility and validity of the findings. According to Anfara et al. (2002), a clear connection between the testimonios of the study participants and the research questions assists in making dissertation data analysis transparent and defensible. This study contributes to the body of literature related to testimonio as methodology based on the population and the transparency with which data were analyzed. Explicit demonstration of code mapping of addresses a methodological gap associated with testimonios.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research questions addressed in this study seek an understanding of the lived experiences related to race, gender, culture, and oppression among Latinas in elected and appointed office. Furthermore, this study is intended to explore how or if Latinas create meaning from these experiences as they navigate white, male-dominated institutions of government. This study is one of the first to explore this group using testimonio and guided by LatCrit and Chicana feminism, and this provides potential opportunities for future research. The centrality of cultural values of familismo and marianismo were prioritized in the lives of the study participants. Latinos, or Hispanic men, are also exposed to the same cultural values in Latino families. It is possible that their testimonios could reveal incongruent perspectives on their own role in the Latino family or elected officials. Similarly, further research among Latino men has the potential to further inform policy and legislative implications gleaned from this research.

In this study, I wanted to represent the heterogeneous nature of Latinos by including women from diverse geography, age, office held, number of years in office, and country of origin. Five of the participants were born in the United States, and two were not. Five identify as

Latina, and one identifies as Afro-Latina. She clarifies that she can also identify as either black or Latina based on her audience or the context of a situation. Further research within this population could limit participation to Latinas all born in the U.S. or all Latinas born outside of the U.S. to the differences based on country of origin. Similarly, a future study could include an increased number of women who identify as Afro-Latina to gain a better understanding of this identity and her lived experiences.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of Latinas in elected and appointed office and was not intended to test a generalized hypothesis (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Sample size for qualitative research, and in particular, dissertation studies should be sufficient to ensure inclusion of nearly all perspectives that may be pertinent to the research questions (Glaser, 1965). Contributing factors for acquisition of saturation also include the knowledge, expertise, and skill of the researcher. I collected seven testimonios for this study, and I trusted in my abilities as a researcher and my cultural intuition as a Latina (Bernal, 1998) to complete data collection and analysis; however, future research could be conducted to determine if the collective narrative of these Latinas remains consistent with a larger sample size.

Summary

In 2016, I participated in a leadership development program designed to function as a campaign school for Latinas who aspired to elected or appointed office. At that time, I had an inclination to run for a small local office such as school board or city council. That program provided the opportunity to interact with and befriend Latinas who had successfully campaigned and won. At the same time, I became aware of newspaper accounts of bad behavior by men in government in my home state. For example, State Senator Wendy Davis stood on the floor of the Texas Legislature to filibuster against a bill that would have placed restrictive limitations on

reproductive rights of women. She was consistently interrupted by her male colleagues in the chamber during her 11-hour filibuster. After requesting and failing to be recognized by the Speaker of the House, fellow State Senator Leticia Van De Putte intervened and admonished the body by shouting, “At what point must a female senator raise her hand or her voice to be recognized over her male colleagues?” Those in attendance noted that this was the first time that a female member has openly and publically admitted to having her voice marginalized by men in the Texas State Legislature. (Texas Observer, 2013). In another instance in 2011, Texas State Representatives Vicki Truitt and Jodie engaged in heated debate about the issue of predatory practices by payday lenders. As the women became more animated in their discussion, male members in the House Chamber began to make noises mimicking a cat’s angry meow. The noises were intended to imply that a “cat-fight” was occurring between two female state legislators. Rather than calling for order from the meowing men, the chairman scolded the women and instructed them to “keep...civil.”

Exposure to these stories led me to investigate the same kinds of stories in other states and in all levels of judicial and legislative bodies of government. Journalists from the Boston Globe documented incidents of harassment that affected women in Massachusetts. In that state, female legislators looked to their female colleagues for advice about men to avoid. The article describes the pervasive nature of sexual harassment including one instance where male lawmakers were watching pornography displayed on a cell phone while in session on the floor of the House of Representatives (2017). Other instances reported by Politico (2017) and the New York Times (2017) describes women’s fears of disclosing sexual harassment for fear of being punished politically or subjecting her allies to political punishment. The women in these stories

convinces themselves that this treatment was something to be endured in silence despite its traumatic effects on their mental wellness.

This frame informed my choice to employ testimonio as a methodology. A review of literature, including dissertations, related to this methodological approach. Guided by the theoretical frameworks of LatCrit and Chicana feminism, I began to develop and understand a sense of my own Chicana Feminist Epistemology. I gained confidence in my identity as a Latina conducting critical race research involving Latinas. Moving toward an understanding of this epistemology enabled me to trust myself and engage in the process instead of trying to maintain an objective distance. The LatCrit framework provided a tool to understand the structural components of oppression experienced by the women.

As I began data collection, I was secure in my understanding of these methodological and theoretical research tools; however, I was not sufficiently prepared for the emotional effects of hearing the testimonios. After the speaking to my first participant, I left that meeting feeling angry, defeated, and sullen. I felt annoyed and short-tempered with my family. As I wrote a reflective journal entry the next day, I came to realize that my emotions were a result of listening to her stories of maltreatment that manifested in my life in other ways. Not all of the emotions were negative. There were instances where I felt joy and pride at hearing stories of accomplishment or a precious memory of family. I continued to write short journal entries after each testimonio, and I also took steps to prepare emotionally before each interview. This preparation sometimes included short guided meditations or affirmations to myself about the importance of giving voice to the stories of these women. Repeated listening to the audio recordings and the process of data analysis also provided fresh frustration or sadness, and in these times, I repeated my process of guided meditations and affirmations. Each testimonio

elicited the same level of emotion, but I was better equipped to identify and manage the feelings using these strategies.

The most significant learning that I gained from this process was the realization that, despite my ability to identify with the study participants and my trust in cultural intuition, their stories were not my stories. I am very politically active and have been encouraged to run for office on several occasions, but this dissertation journey and the process of testimonio reminded me that my role as a researcher is to maintain fidelity to the research design and the purpose of the study. In this case, it was to give voice to those who do not have one and to advantage the experiences women who have suffered oppression and marginalization. I realized this through an epiphanic moment while on an out-of-state trip to collect a testimonio from one of the study participants. In my personal and professional life, it is not uncommon for me to post photos with elected officials on social media while attending political events. Of course, in order to maintain the confidentiality of the study participants, I refrained from any photos of the participant and from disclosing that I was traveling out-of-state at all. On the trip back home, I reflected on what I perceived to be a shift or transformation in my understanding of my role and purpose as a researcher. Her testimonio was hers, told in the first person as a witness to her own experiences of familismo, marianismo, oppression, and marginalization. She trusted me with her words, and had faith that I would provide an outlet for them to be heard. My dissertation journey began with the thought that I would conduct a research study, but my conceptualization of that study was somewhat sterile and prescriptive. I envisioned that this dissertation would justify the indictment of men for their misdeeds. The findings support that to a certain extent, but they also reveal complex experiences that include oppression but are not defined by it. Rather, both positive and negative experiences are essential for the creation of meaning and purpose in the lives of the

Latinas. At its conclusion, my journey has filled me a tremendous sense of obligation and reverence for the experiences of these women and to my fellow Latina researchers whose profession I am privileged to join.

The testimonios of the women in this study tell a story of affection for tradition and love of family. They do not feel limited or oppressed by the traditional gender roles defined within the cultural values of marianismo and familismo. To the contrary, these are seen as happy and welcome obligations that support family structure and cohesiveness. In fact, these roles are not shunned in their own marriages and families; in fact, they are perpetuated and passed down. The exception is the belief that a good wife and mother does not seek higher education or work outside the home. The testimonios reveal a shift toward women assuming prominent roles in the household and in the workplace. The voices of the Latinas tell the story of how they adhere to dearly held cultural values and a profound fondness for tradition while, at the same time, positioning themselves as confident and capable elected officials.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Letter of Invitation

October 23, 2017

Title of Study: En Sus Propias Palabras: Testimonios of Latinas in Elected and Appointed Office

Principal Investigator: Andrea Guajardo, PhD candidate, Dreeben School of Education, University of the Incarnate Word

Dear Ms. Alvarez:

Please accept this letter as an invitation to participate in a research study entitled: ***En Sus Propias Palabras: Testimonios of Latinas in Elected and Appointed Office***. The study will serve as my dissertation work in order to complete my doctoral program.

The purpose of this research project is to learn more about the lived experiences of Latinas who have been elected or appointed to public office at the State or Federal level. My study is focused on issues of gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status/story, class, culture, and language. I am interested in hearing your experiences related to these topics, if any.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to provide a personal interview to discuss aspects of your personal and professional life. Participation is voluntary and confidential. Every effort will be made to protect your identity, the identities of those to whom you might refer, or the office you hold/held.

The duration of the interview is approximately 1-2 hours depending on the depth and breadth of information that you choose to share. This research is expected to highlight the realities faced by Latinas who have been elected or appointed to public office and will provide valuable insight to other women who might choose to run for office.

I sincerely hope you will consider sharing your experiences. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ana Wandless-Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA, Research Officer (wandless@uiwtx.edu) or at (210) 805-3036.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (see below for contact information).

Thank you,

Andrea Guajardo, MPH
Doctoral Candidate
abguajardo@gmail.com
210-781-1047

Osman Ozturgut, PhD
Dean, Office of Research
and Graduate Studies
Ozturgut@uiwtx.edu
210-805-5885

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of the Incarnate Word's Research Ethics Board

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

En Sus Propias Palabras: Testimonios of Latinas in Elected Office

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Andrea Guajardo, a doctoral student at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW), under the supervision of Osman Ozturgut, PhD. The goal of the study is to understand your experiences as an elected or appointed official through personal interviews.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are hold an elected or appointed office and identify as a Hispanic woman or Latina. If you choose to participate in this study, the researcher will arrange to meet with you for an interview lasting 1-2 hours. Interviews will be audio recorded.

There is minimal risk to you for participating in the study. Your information will remain confidential and pseudo names will be created to protect your identity. The data collected in the course of the research will be stored in a safe place and only accessed by the researchers. Transcription will be completed by a third-party, professional transcriptionist who has executed a confidentiality agreement specifically related to this research. At the end of transcription, all audio recordings will be destroyed.

There is no financial or any other type of incentive for participating in the study.

Benefits of the study include an understanding of the racial, gendered, and cultured experiences of Latinas in public office and contribution to the greater body of knowledge.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate or to stop participation at any time. If you choose to stop taking part in the study, your audio recordings and interview transcripts will be destroyed.

If you have additional questions at any time, contact:

Andrea Guajardo, MPH
(210) 781-1047
adguajar@uiwtx.edu

Osman Ozturgut, PhD
(210) 805-5885
ozturgut@uiwtx.edu

The UIW committee that reviews research on human subjects, the Institutional Review Board, will answer any questions about your rights as a research subject. Contact the IRB by calling (210) 805- 3036. Your signature indicates (1) that you are consenting to participate in the individual interview, (2) that you have read and understand the information provided above, and (3) that the information above was explained to you.

Print Name

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C

Guajardo Dissertation Interview Protocol

En Sus Propios Palabras: Testimonios of Latinas in Elected Office

Pseudonym (if requested):

Informant Political Background

1. What office do you currently hold? [or] Which offices have you held?
2. How many total years have you been in office?
3. In the same office? Different office? Same office

Introduction

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?
2. Can you tell me about your family?

Childhood

1. Can you talk about your childhood and how you grew up?
2. Can you talk about your school experiences as a child?
3. Tell me about your pathway to college.
4. What was your profession/what jobs did you hold before you were elected or appointed?

Elected and Appointed Office

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself in the context of the office that you hold. Tell me about the [representative, senator, governor, etc]
 - a. How does the elected official differ from you in your personal life, if at all?
2. Tell me about how or if you identify as a Latina?
3. What were your initial thoughts about running for office?
4. When did you believe that you could be successfully elected/appointed?
5. Were there any persons who influenced that decision?
6. What were some expectations that you had about running for office?
7. Describe your first day in office.
8. What were some expectations that you had for serving in public office?
9. Can you describe a time when you felt challenged because of your identity?
10. Can you tell me about your interactions with your professional colleagues?
11. Can you describe a time when your Latina/Hispanic identity was an asset to you?
12. Have you ever witnessed another Latina/Hispanic woman being treated differently because of your identity?
13. What has helped you feel confident in your personal and professional life?
14. Have you ever had any doubts about your decision to seek office?
15. Since you have held office, have you been treated differently by anyone?
16. What is your best advice for Latinas/Hispanic women who aspire to public office? What is your biggest lesson that you would want her to know?