

Bellarmino University

ScholarWorks@Bellarmine

---

Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Capstones

Graduate Research

---

4-30-2020

## “We Live in Two Worlds”: Foreign-born College and University Presidents – Perspectives, Leadership, and Resiliency

Kristie Johnson

[kjohnson34@bellarmine.edu](mailto:kjohnson34@bellarmine.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.bellarmino.edu/tdc>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Johnson, Kristie, ““We Live in Two Worlds”: Foreign-born College and University Presidents – Perspectives, Leadership, and Resiliency” (2020). *Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Capstones*. 82.  
<https://scholarworks.bellarmino.edu/tdc/82>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at ScholarWorks@Bellarmine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses, Dissertations, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@Bellarmine. For more information, please contact [jstemmer@bellarmine.edu](mailto:jstemmer@bellarmine.edu), [kpeers@bellarmine.edu](mailto:kpeers@bellarmine.edu).

“WE LIVE IN TWO WORLDS”:  
FOREIGN-BORN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS –  
PERSPECTIVES, LEADERSHIP, AND RESILIENCY

BY

Kristie S. Johnson

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

Bellarmino University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

April 2020

Kristie S. Johnson

“We Live in Two Worlds”: Foreign-born College and University Presidents –  
Perspectives, Leadership, and Resiliency

Dr. Donald Mitchell, Jr. (Chair)

Annley Frazier Thornton School of Education, Bellarmine University

Dr. Patrick Englert

Student Affairs, Bellarmine University

Dr. Michael Vetter

Annley Frazier Thornton School of Education, Bellarmine University

Copyright © 2020

Kristie S. Johnson

All Rights Reserved

## **Acknowledgements**

As I reflect on this academic and personal journey, there are many people who were instrumental to my success. I would be remiss if I did not first acknowledge God and His grace during this journey. During the dark hours, He never forsake me. My family always provided love and support and never doubted I would succeed. I thank Dr. Fred Rhodes for his vision in creating this Leadership in Higher Education program at Bellarmine University. I thank Cohort A for being the best group of classmates you could hope for. I thank Pat and Tamekka for the bonds of sisterhood and the daily laughs and encouragement that sustained me. I thank my sisters Demetrice and Erika, who are on their own journey and will no doubt succeed. And, I thank my Marian University family—but especially Janice who listened patiently to me for the last two years and always celebrated my success no matter how large or small they were. Finally, none of this could have happened in the timeframe in which it did without having an amazing chair who was patient, kind, and persistent. Donald “DJ” Mitchell, Jr., Ph.D. is a rock star and I was blessed to have him on my team.

## Dedication

All I am I owe to my mother, Karen Portundo. Thank you for always believing in me, loving me unconditionally, and for supporting all my dreams and aspirations even when they took me far away from you. I love you!

I could not have accomplished this without the love and support of my husband, Dr. Michael S. Johnson who took care of our son, Sean, while I worked on this dissertation. You have been amazing, and I love you for all you do for our family.

Sean, never stop believing in yourself—you can do anything you put your mind to. Also, never stop believing in humanity, for we all have depended on the kindness and compassion of strangers.

“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:2

## **Abstract**

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States to determine how their cultural background and traditions influenced their leadership and prepared them to lead. The study also examined the strategies foreign-born university presidents, who self-identify as people of Color, utilized to navigate to and through the presidential pipeline and ways in which resiliency was demonstrated. The study was grounded in asset-based community development and resiliency which provided a framework to understand how the presidents contribute to their campus and local community and how they were resilient in their presidential roles.

Fifteen foreign-born college and university presidents representing ten countries participated in semi-structured interviews. The presidents were geographically located across the United States and represented public, private, 4-year, and 2-year institutions. Findings revealed the importance of education, family obligations, and the influence of culture on their decision to immigrate to the United States; the challenges of living in two worlds, straddling multiple identities, and how they negotiate their sense of belonging in the United States; challenges encountered on their pathway to the presidency; accent discrimination, biases, and having to work harder than their peers; and, assets the presidents bring, resiliency demonstrated, and the importance of a legacy.

## Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
STATEMENT OF PROBLEM .....	2
PURPOSE OF STUDY .....	5
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	6
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	7
SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY .....	7
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	8
LIMITATIONS .....	9
OVERVIEW OF STUDY .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>11</b>
THE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT IN THE UNITED STATES.....	11
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	13
STATISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS .....	14
PATHWAY TO THE PRESIDENCY .....	17
MINORITIZED COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES.....	19
WOMEN OF COLOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS .....	20
WOMEN OF COLOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS PATHWAY TO THE PRESIDENCY .....	21
WOMEN OF COLOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS CHALLENGES .....	22
MEN OF COLOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS .....	25
MEN OF COLOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS PATHWAY TO THE PRESIDENCY .....	26
MEN OF COLOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS CHALLENGES .....	27
OUT GAY AND LESBIAN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS .....	29
OUT GAY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS PATHWAYS .....	31
OUT GAY AND LESBIAN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS CHALLENGES .....	33
FOREIGN-BORN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS .....	34
DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOREIGN-BORN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS .....	35
PATHWAY THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION .....	36
ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT .....	38
RESILIENCE THEORY .....	40
EXAMPLES OF IMMIGRANT RESILIENCE .....	42
CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	45



<b>CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>46</b>
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	46
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH .....	48
PHENOMENOLOGY .....	48
RESEARCHER’S POSITIONALITY .....	49
CONTROL OF BIAS .....	52
PARTICIPANT SELECTION .....	53
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS .....	58
DATA COLLECTION .....	61
INTERVIEW PROCESS .....	64
DATA ANALYSIS .....	66
DOCUMENT ANALYSIS .....	69
STATEMENT OF VALIDITY .....	71
STATEMENT OF TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	71
<b>CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>73</b>
PARTICIPANT PROFILES .....	73
<i>Dr. Omara Bejelloun - Asia</i> .....	74
<i>President Berta Caceres - Asia</i> .....	75
<i>President Tahar Djaout - Asia</i> .....	75
<i>Dr. Fanny Eddy - Asia</i> .....	76
<i>President Farag Foda - Africa</i> .....	76
<i>President Marielle Franco – The Americas</i> .....	77
<i>President Rutillio Grande - South America</i> .....	77
<i>President Victor Jara - Asia</i> .....	78
<i>President Jaswant Singh Khalra - Asia</i> .....	78
<i>President Xulhaz Mannan - Asia</i> .....	79
<i>President Iqbal Masih - Asia</i> .....	79
<i>President Chico Mendes - South America</i> .....	79
<i>President Ruben Um Nyobe - Africa</i> .....	80
<i>President Avijit Roy - Asia</i> .....	80
<i>President Norbert Zongo - Africa</i> .....	81
OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS AND THEMES .....	81
<i>Coming to America</i> .....	83
<i>Should I Stay or Should I Go?</i> .....	85
<i>Remember Who You Are and Whose You Are</i> .....	86
<i>We Live in Two Worlds</i> .....	87
<i>Straddling Multiple Identities</i> .....	89
<i>To Whom Do You Belong?</i> .....	91
<i>Ready or Not, Here I Come</i> .....	93
<i>Leading with Grace</i> .....	94
<i>Leading with Culture</i> .....	97
<i>A Bumpy Path</i> .....	100

<i>They Saw me Like Olivia Pope - Crises Management</i> .....	102
<i>Go Back to Your Country!</i> .....	105
<i>Lost in Translation - Accents, Biases, and Microaggressions</i> .....	106
<i>Working Hard for the Money</i> .....	107
<i>If I Ruled the World</i> .....	110
<i>Giving You the Best That I Got - Assets</i> .....	112
<i>Sense of Purpose - Resiliency</i> .....	115
<i>Everything is Everything - Legacy</i> .....	117
CONCLUSION .....	119
<b>CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION, AND FUTURE RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>123</b>
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .....	123
POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION .....	138
FUTURE RESEARCH .....	139
CONCLUSION .....	140
<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>141</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	<b>154</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....	<b>155</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b> .....	<b>157</b>
<b>APPENDIX D</b> .....	<b>158</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table</b>	<b>Item</b>	
3.1	Demographics of Participants .....	59
3.2	Gender of Participants.....	59
3.3	Regional Location of Foreign-born Presidents .....	60
3.4	Duration in Office and Institutional Data .....	60
3.5	Data Collection Phase and Process .....	63
3.6	Interview Duration .....	70
4.1	Crises Management Issues.....	105

## List of Figures

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Item</b>
4.1	Themes for Foreign-born University Presidents.....82

## Chapter One: Introduction

*University leadership increasingly reflects neither the student body being led nor the world in which graduates will need to operate, a situation that engenders disadvantages and lost opportunities.* (Azziz, 2014, para. 8)

In higher education, the role of the college or university president is viewed as the epitome of academic achievement and sets the tone of the campus environment (Cook & Kim, 2012). Ricardo Azziz's excerpt from his article above *Back to the Future: Why is the Diversity of University Leadership Stuck in the '80s?*, highlights the challenges higher education faces as student populations become more racially and ethnically diverse while college and university presidents remain relatively White and homogenous (Azziz, 2014; Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017).

Research from the 2017 *American Council on Education's* (ACE) American College President Survey indicate that while much of U.S. higher education is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, the majority of college and university presidents in the United States are predominantly White males in their sixties (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The report also indicates that while the percentage of college and university presidents who self-identify as a racial or ethnic minority slowly increased from 13% in 2011 to 17% in 2016, this number is low and does not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of college students (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). In fact, in the 2012 ACE survey of college and university presidents, racial and ethnic diversity declined between 2006 and 2011 (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Therefore, although there have been nominal gains in racial and ethnic minorities ascending to the presidency at colleges and universities in the United States, they are significantly lagging compared to the number of White men and White women who are college and university presidents in the United States. The

issue is even further exacerbated as White males continue to seek multiple presidencies thereby hindering diversity efforts in the president's office (Wrighten, 2018). The results of the survey demonstrate that college and university presidents in the United States who identify as racial and ethnic minorities tend to be selected to lead community colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). Consistently selecting racial and ethnic minorities to only lead community colleges, HBCUs and MSIs results in a lack of adequate representation of Black and Brown presidents at predominantly White institutions (PWI; Duree, 2007; Gagliardi et al. 2017). Additional research indicates that college governing boards are still largely represented by older White males and lack racial, ethnic, gender and generational diversity (Fain, 2010). This lack of diversity is even more prevalent on boards of private academic institutions where Whites account for 87.5 percent of trustee's positions (Fain, 2010). The Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (ABG), recognizes that as boards are responsible for presidential selections their lack of diverse representation can adversely impact and may undermine institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (ABG, n.d.).

Despite these meager advances in the diversity of college and university leadership, there have been recent increases in women of Color, men of Color, and out gay and lesbian college and university presidents who are leading postsecondary institutions in the United States (Bullard, 2013; Castro, 2018; Duree, 2007; Englert, 2018; Gagliardi et al., 2017; Herring, 2010; Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Robinson; 2018;).

### **Statement of the Problem**

While there is a slight increase in racial and ethnic diversity among college and university presidents, the extant literature demonstrates a gap in regards to college and university presidents

who identify as foreign-born. Consequently, citizenship and immigration status questions are not specifically identified in any of the ACE American College President Survey, the Survey of College and University Presidents conducted by Inside Higher Ed and Gallup, or the Council of Independent Colleges Annual Surveys (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Hartley & Godin, 2009; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). In particular, the ACE surveys ask college and university presidents to identify as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Caucasian, Asian American, Native American, and two or more races. Only recently during the 2016 survey was “Middle Eastern” a response option. These rigid racial and ethnic identity categories provide limited opportunities for authentic inclusivity for immigrants and foreign-born respondents. For example, a college or university president from the African continent may not self-identify as African American and may feel inadequately represented on the survey. Likewise, an individual born in India or China may not self-identify or even relate to the experiences of an Asian American born in the United States.

This lack of disaggregated data therefore makes it difficult to identify foreign-born college and university presidents, where they are located, how their cultural backgrounds and traditions influenced their leadership style, and strategies of how they maneuvered the pipeline to the presidency. Furthermore, without a professional association like LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education or even a consistent method for identifying individuals born outside of the United States who are leading colleges and universities, the tracking of foreign-born college and university presidents is a missed opportunity to explore the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents as well as to identify trends, gaps, and pathways to the presidency.

By comparison, college and university students are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse (Azziz, 2014; Blumenstyk, 2014; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). Data from the U.S. Department of Education indicate that by 2021 there will be a 25% increase in African American students, a 42% increase in Hispanic students, and only a four percent increase in White students (Azziz, 2014; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). Further, data from the U.S. Department of Education indicates that with the annual increases in the racial and ethnic diversity of college students, over 40% of these individuals between 18 and 24 years old identify as a minority or person of Color (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education, Statistics, 2016). As a result of the increase in minority as well as foreign-born students attending post-secondary institutions, immigrants and students of Color are demanding more ethnic and racial representation in the office of the president (Azziz, 2014).

For example, Azziz (2014) states in *Back to the Future: Why is the Diversity of University Leadership Stuck in the '80s?*, “Institutional leaders can strongly influence institutional culture; having leaders from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences enriches the intellectual and cultural climate in which students learn” (para. 8). As the demographics of higher education become increasingly heterogeneous and diverse, students are demanding diversity in the classroom as well as in the president’s office. Scholars such as Blumenstyk (2014) indicate that as more college and university presidents prepare to retire in the next 10 to 15 years, there will be many leadership vacancies throughout postsecondary institutions in the United States. As such, it will also serve as an opportunity for more diverse candidates, such as immigrants and the foreign-born, to assume the role as college and university presidents (Blumenstyk, 2014).



## **Purpose of the Study**

Azziz (2014) suggests academic institutions provide greater diversity in the office of the president as well as other influential offices on campus. He notes, “exposure to and experience working with people from different cultural backgrounds better prepares students for the real-world working environment of their futures” (Azziz, 2014, para. 8). Students at colleges or universities with a diverse president benefit from this representation. The benefits are even greater when the university president is foreign-born or an immigrant (Marklein, 2016; Skinner, 2018). These benefits include the “breadth and depth of unique perspectives, enhanced creditability with other minoritized groups on campus, as well as greater success in recruiting other minorities and women for academic and leadership positions” (Schwartz, 2010, p. 2).

Not surprisingly, the office of the college or university president is seen as embodying the “educational philosophy, direction, and culture of their institution” (Oikelome, 2017, p. 24) and should represent the diverse perspectives of the student population as well as represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the academy (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). A lack of diversity in the president’s office is a missed opportunity to incorporate differing leadership perspectives as it relates to strategic planning, conflict and negotiation, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives as well as campus internationalization efforts (Azziz, 2014; Cook & Kim, 2012; Gagliardi et al., 2017; Marklein, 2016). For example, Oikelome (2017) insists that “diversification of the college presidency brings a variety of thought, innovation, and divergent perspectives to address the needs of a dynamic student population and helps colleges navigate the various challenges facing higher education” (p. 24). While recent literature has started to include the pathways to the presidency for other underrepresented groups such as women, people of Color, and the LGBTQ communities, there is an obvious gap in the literature as it pertains to

foreign-born college and university presidents, their pathways to the presidency, and their unique perspectives (Azziz, 2014; Marklein, 2016; Skinner, 2018).

The purpose of the study was to examine the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States, how their cultural background and traditions influenced their leadership, how these experiences have prepared them to lead, has impacted their pathways to the presidency, and provide an opportunity to discuss challenges they may have encountered. I explored these experiences through the framework of resiliency as it pertains to immigrants as well the theoretical framework of asset-based community development.

### **Research Questions**

In order to gain a deep and rich perspective on the lived experiences of foreign-born university presidents, the following research questions shaped this study:

- What are the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in their journey to the college presidency and how do foreign-born college and university presidents perceive the influence of their cultural background on their journey to the presidency?
- What strategies and approaches can be identified from the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in navigating the presidential pipeline and advancing to the presidency?
- How does resiliency manifest itself in the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents?

## **Theoretical Framework**

This research was explored through the context of asset-based community development theoretical framework. Asset-based community development, a subset of community development, looks at the contributions, gifts, and assets, minoritized stakeholders contribute to their communities through their culture, knowledge, and social capital (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). Further, the study was grounded in research that analyzes the resiliency of immigrants. Through examples of immigrant resiliency, I examined how immigrants' cultural backgrounds and traditions allows the foreign-born president to adapt, adjust, thrive in the face of adversity and “promotes academic and psychological resilience” (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010, p. 258). While the goal of the research was to identify gaps in the literature as it relates to foreign-born college and university presidents and their pathways to leadership, an asset-based theoretical lens was used to ground the research.

Furthermore, the resiliency of immigrants framed the experiences of the participants and provided an opportunity for shared as well as differing perspectives. Cardoso and Thompson (2010) emphasized that “because there are multiple pathways to resiliency, these pathways must be examined within the context of culture, development and history” (p. 259) and addressing the research through this framework accomplished that.

## **Summary of Methodology**

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological research design in order to gain a rich descriptive narrative and the essence of the experiences of foreign-born college or university presidents in the United States. I examined the lived experiences of 15 foreign-born college or university presidents located in the United States. Phenomenology, as described by Ravitch and Carl (2016) “focuses on the experience of the participant(s) in an examination of shared

experience” (p.224). By utilizing a phenomenological approach, I gained a better understanding of the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents, how their cultural traditions and backgrounds have influenced their leadership and prepared them to lead, and provide individuals with an opportunity to discuss their pathways to the presidency. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of college and university presidents representing public and private institutions. All of the participants self-identified as a Black or Brown person of Color representing countries and regions of the world. As a researcher of Color, I recognize that women and Black and Brown people of Color are not always afforded an opportunity to share their perspectives. Therefore, I wanted to “integrate multiple individual perspectives” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 147) and provide a space to share the narratives and lived experiences of traditionally underrepresented individuals in the office of president who identify as people of Color.

### **Definition of Terms**

**African American or Black** – a person who identifies as having ancestors from the African diaspora (Jackson & Cathran, 2003). The terms will be used interchangeably.

**Asset-based Community Development Framework** - a subset of community development, which looks at the contributions, gifts, and essential assets, minoritized stakeholders contribute to their communities through their culture, knowledge and social capital (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996).

**Foreign-born or Immigrant** – A person who was born in another country. Bourke (2014) states that “an immigrant can be a legalized citizen, a lawful permanent resident (LPR), a refugee or asylum seeker or someone who is unauthorized” (p. 9). These term will be used interchangeably throughout the research.

**Resiliency** – the ability of an individual to adapt and excel in the face of adversity (Luthar et al., 2000; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017).

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation to the study was the lack of representation of people of Color from all of the continents. The study lacked representation of people of Color from Europe and Australia. The research also did not include individuals who represented indigenous or aboriginal communities. Further, this study lacked representation from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) which would have provided a different context in understanding the presidents' experiences. For example, as an immigrant and a person of Color, would leading a minority serving institution (PWI) have provided the presidents with a greater sense of belonging or a deeper connection to their students and other stakeholders as compared to leading a PWI? Finally, while this study explored leadership, leadership styles, and the impact of culture on leadership, traditional leadership theory was excluded due to its primary use to describe and assess the leadership effectiveness of White males from the dominant culture.

### **Overview of Study**

Chapter two is an overview of the literature review and will explore the overall role of the college and university president in the United States, changes in U.S. presidential demographics, the presidential experiences of minoritized groups, such as women of Color, men of Color, out gay and lesbian college and university presidents, and finally, the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States. Chapter three discusses how this qualitative study used a phenomenological research design. Semi-structured interviews with 15 foreign-born college and university presidents were conducted. The objective was to interview

foreign-born college and university presidents and examine how their cultural backgrounds and traditions influenced their leadership and prepared them to lead academic institutions in the United States. Chapter four provides findings of the study demonstrated through themes and subthemes and Chapter five provides the discussion, implication for practice, and future research.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Within the last 10 years, there has been increasing interest in the role foreign-born college and university presidents play and the value they bring to postsecondary institutions in the United States (American Bazaar Wire, 2013; Chitnis, 2014; Foderaro, 2011; Marklein, 2016; Skinner, 2018a). As higher education demographics become more diverse, interest in foreign-born and immigrant academic leadership is even more relevant. This is particularly more salient as the academe enters an era where campus internationalization efforts, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, and global partnerships are quickly becoming strategic priorities (Cook & Kim, 2012; Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017; Selingo, Chheng, & Clark, 2017). This literature review discusses the history of the college or university president in the United States; roles and responsibilities of the office; demographics of current college and university presidents; a description of the experiences for minoritized college and university presidents (women of Color, men of Color, out gay and lesbian); pathways to the presidency for minoritized presidents; and challenges minoritized presidents face. The latter half of this literature review introduces the reader to foreign-born college and university presidents, their pathway through higher education, and challenges and opportunities foreign-born college and university presidents face. Finally, an overview of asset-based community development and resiliency theory is introduced to theoretically ground the research in understanding the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents as they lead U.S.-based postsecondary institutions.

### **The College or University President in the United States**

The role of the college or university president is one of the most influential positions in academia (Cook & Kim, 2012). According to Wessel and Keim (1994), the first U.S. college

president was Henry Dunster, president of Harvard College from 1640-1654. During his tenure, Dunster was intentional about the organizational structure of the institution and worked towards efficiency and effectiveness (Harvard University, n.d.). Accordingly, two of his most significant contributions included the drafting of the papers of incorporation for Harvard College—known as the Charter of 1650—which established the governing body of Harvard University and is a template still utilized today (Harvard University, n.d.). Per Harvard University (n.d.), “the Charter established a perpetually renewing, seven-member body that shall be called by the name of President and Fellows of Harvard College” (para. 4). Equally important, President Dunster’s second contribution to the field was to ensure there was academic rigor, which resulted in the restructuring of the curriculum and increasing the graduation completion time from three years to four years (Harvard University, n.d.). To date, President Dunster is regarded as one of the most influential college or university presidents in the United States (Harvard University, n.d.). It is worthwhile to note that by identifying as a White male, President Dunster effectively established the precedence and the trajectory of how university presidents would be represented in higher education many decades later.

In order to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by foreign-born college or university presidents, it is important to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of this position, who these individuals are, their respective pathways to the presidency, the changing demographics, and what the future may entail for the college or university presidency. Having a deeper discernment of the position, challenges within the role of the college or university presidency will provide a framework in understanding how foreign-born college and university presidents ascend to the office of the president, ways in which they



demonstrate resiliency, and how their cultural background influences their leadership and prepares them to lead.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities of the U.S. college or university president are in a constant state of flux (Cook, 2012; Cook & Kim, 2012; Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017; Seltzer, 2017). In addition to managing financial constraints and dwindling endowments, college and university presidents are tasked with increasing responsibilities, demanding internal and external constituents, and lessening support nationally for educational attainment (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017; Selingo, Chheng, & Clark, 2017). Some of the challenges college and university presidents face include preparing for and managing record enrollment, increasing campus diversity and internationalization efforts, as well as the pressure to implement innovative technologies, strengthening community outreach, and bolstering relationships with respective governing boards (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018; Seltzer, 2017).

While most college and university presidents feel adequately prepared to lead an academic institution, many feel their leadership could improve in several areas (Selingo et al., 2017). Some of these areas include strategic planning, fundraising, academic affairs, community/civic relations, and budgeting (Cook & Kim, 2012; Selingo et al., 2017; Seltzer, 2017). Further, as postsecondary education continues to represent diverse constituents, college and university presidents are reminded that they will need to develop a repertoire of expertise to best manage institutional resources while strategically planning for the future (Cook & Kim 2012; Gagliardi et al., 2017).

In *Pathways to the University Presidency*, Selingo et al. (2017) discuss the challenge of planning for the future in higher education, the evolving role of the college and university

president, and the skills deemed necessary to lead effectively. For example, in the 1800s, most presidents were clergy who spent equal time leading the institution as well as teaching courses (Selingo et al., 2017). During the 1900s-1944, the office of the president became more professionalized, and the college and university president was viewed as an administrator with the delegated responsibility from the board to “run the campus” (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 4). By 1945-1975, the surge in veterans participating in the GI Bill gave rise to unforeseen student enrollment, and college and university presidents of this era were responsible for expanding the infrastructure of their campus (Selingo et al., 2017).

Subsequently, during the timeframe between 1976 and 2008, college and university presidents were tasked with carefully managing the financial responsibilities of their institutions and were more fiscally conservative (Selingo et al., 2017). Finally, from 2009 to the present, the competing priorities of the institution have required the contemporary college and university president to be what is considered a “multidisciplinarian” (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 4), one who is required to have the ability to “build and navigate academic disciplines, institutions, and outside partnerships” (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 4), while also proactively addressing issues of access, diversity, equity, inclusion and the changing demographics of students, constituents, and the communities they serve (Selingo et al., 2017).

### **Statistics and Demographics**

As the roles and responsibilities of the college and university president continue to evolve and expand, unfortunately, the racial and ethnic representation of leadership has remained largely unchanged for the last 30 years (Cook & Kim, 2012; Gagliardi et al., 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). In the 2017 *American College President Study* (ACPS) conducted by the American Council on Education (ACE), researchers interviewed approximately 1,500 college and

university presidents nationwide to determine growth trends. The ACE findings suggest that, although higher education institutions are becoming more diverse and reflecting the changing demographics of the United States, the leadership at most U.S. colleges and universities continue to represent predominantly White males with doctoral degrees in education. More specifically, an examination of the data indicates that the majority of college and university presidents are White males over the age of 60 years old and represent 58% of post-secondary leadership in the United States (ACE, 2017).

While research from both the 2017 ACPS and the 2018 Survey of College and University Presidents demonstrate there have been increases in underrepresented populations, such as women and racial and ethnic minorities, in leadership positions in higher education, the researchers note that this does not translate to a seismic shift in diversifying the office of the president (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). For example, although women have made a few notable gains in leadership roles in academia, diversifying the top academic positions at many U.S. colleges and universities continues to be a slow process (Gagliardi et al., 2017). To illustrate this point, in 2011, women college and university presidents represented 26% of the academy and only increased to 30% by 2016 (Gagliardi et al., 2017). In addition, during the same time period, the percentage of college and university presidents who were racial or ethnic minorities also slightly increased from 13% in 2011 to 17% in 2016 (Gagliardi et al., 2017). In contrast to four-year institutions, community colleges nationwide have demonstrated greater diversity with women presidents representing 36% of presidential appointments (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Incidentally, community colleges also have the highest percentage of presidents who identify as racial or ethnic minorities at 20% in 2016, up from 12.7% in 2011

(Gagliardi et al., 2017). In light of these data, the number of minoritized college and university presidents is still small compared to their White peers (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

In *The Challenges of the Community College President in the New Millennium*, Duree (2007) identified the alarming trend that between the years 2012 and 2015, community college presidents would start to age out and were poised to retire. Duree surmised that the phenomena of large numbers of retiring college presidents would leave a vacuum of academic leadership positions unfilled. Further, due to limited access to powerful networking circles, many qualified minority candidates would be unaware of the leadership traits and educational preparation needed to secure these positions and succeed. Duree notes:

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing community colleges in the new millennium is filling the leadership pipeline with individuals who possess the necessary skills and traits to be successful and are committed to upholding the community college core values and mission. (p. 2)

Duree also argued that “because community colleges are expected to serve a more culturally and ethnically diverse population than four-year institutions, skills and philosophies required to effectively engage with issues related to diversity and higher education are recognized as paramount for new century leaders” (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002, as cited by Duree, 2007, p. 31). Most importantly, Duree’s research highlights the need to not only diversify the employment pipelines leading to the community college presidency but to also prepare these leaders to work with diverse populations.

Earlier studies (e.g., see Amey, VanDerLinde, & Brown, 2002) indicate that diversifying the pipeline has proven to be more difficult in reality. For example, although Boards and Trustees express their interest in diverse leaders and experiences, Boards tend to lean towards

White candidates and individuals with previous higher education experience when seeking college and university presidents (Skinner, 2018b). Duree (2007) found that previous experience in academia was valuable and that 54.5% of survey participants had held an academic administration position such as chief academic officer or provost before their community college presidency. Meanwhile, community colleges in the United States continue to reflect more diversity in both student enrollment and presidential leadership. Most four-year college and university presidencies lack this level of diversity in presidential positions and are frequently represented by non-minority males who have ascended to this position through traditional academic pathways, strong and connected networking and mentorship opportunities, and professional and leadership development programs (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018; Selingo et al. 2017).

### **Pathway to the Presidency**

In *Career Patterns of Private Four-Year College and University Presidents in the United States*, Wessel and Keim (1994) found that the most common pathway to the college or university presidency was through traditional academic routes of faculty appointments, deanship, provostship, chief academic officer positions, and eventually to the presidency. Similar to Wessel and Keim's (1994) work, Hardin and Godin's (2009) also discussed that at one time, the commonly held position most college and university presidents had prior to their appointment was that of chief academic officer. However, Hardin and Godin's research also indicates that across the board, pathway trends are beginning to change and college and university presidents now come to academia representing many different industries. The report, which spans from 1986 to 2006, indicates that, in particular, Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) college and university presidents are unique from their peers and are in fact less likely to have been a chief

academic officer (35% versus 40% for the national average) and are more likely to have been non-academics (33% versus 23% for the national average). This trend of non-academics such as individuals with experiences in strategic planning, advancement, educational research, and student affairs practitioners pursuing leadership roles in higher education has increased in recent years (Crandall, Espinosa, Gangone, & Huges, 2017).

In fact, data from the *2017 American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship Program* report, the premier leadership development program in higher education, acknowledge that while 73% of participants come from an academic affairs background, 17% tend to represent other campus divisions such as institutional advancement, student affairs, special assistant to the president, with numbers increasing (Crandall et al., 2017). Similarly, Duree's (2007) work which addressed the challenges of community college presidents found that two-year institutions are more open to prospective leaders coming from the fields of technology, finance or the business industry and believe that candidates bring more hands-on experience compared to a traditional academics.

In particular, Duree (2007) identified three main pathways to the community college presidency. The first includes internal candidates who start out as faculty members and work their way through academia as deans, provosts, academic/administrative vice presidents, and then finally ascend to the presidency. The second path Duree identified are presidents from the business and industry sector, where candidates are believed to bring a fresh or different perspective to the role of the presidency. The third, and final path, Duree identified are candidates with experience in the non-profit sector.

In contrast to Duree's (2007) research, Oikelome (2017) found that although boards and search committees indicate their willingness to hire non-academics, in reality "the organizational

structure and culture of the academy still favors the traditional academic background” (p. 31). That is, unless you are a male (Oikelome, 2017). Oikelome notes that the “current research on college presidents indicate that there are more male college presidents from non-academic or non-traditional backgrounds compared to female college presidents” (p. 31). Oikelome’s research reiterates that this inequity and double-standard in higher education hiring practices have adverse effects on women and minoritized individuals who aspire to be college or university presidents, yet may not have the traditional academic training as their White peers.

### **Minoritized College and University Presidents in the United States**

As more college and university presidents plan to retire, in particular White males, there is a prediction that there will be a huge void of positions to fill (Cook & Kim, 2012; Gagliardi et al., 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). Scholars and those who aspire to leadership positions in higher education see this as an opportunity to diversify the presidential pipeline (Blumenstyk, 2014). In particular, many maintain that this is an opportunity “for increasing diversity in the presidential ranks, so that higher education leaders will be more reflective of the institutions they head” (Blumenstyk, 2014, p. 106). This nascent movement to diversify the office of college and university presidents has not kept pace with changing demographics of most postsecondary institutions in the United States (Blumenstyk, 2014).

To illustrate this point, in the 2017 ACPS the authors indicate that, while the rates of racial and ethnic minorities in the college and university presidency have slowly increased, the change has been insufficient compared to the changing student demographics in the United States (Gagliardi et al., 2017). For instance, in 1986, during the first year of the ACPS, racial and ethnic minorities accounted for eight percent of all college and university presidents (Cook & Kim, 2012). In 2016, racial and ethnic minorities accounted for 17% of university presidents,

which only represents a nine percentage point increase over the course of 30 years (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

As racial and ethnic diversity continues to permeate through the United States and influence postsecondary education, these data reinforce that higher education leaders are not adequately prepared to address this change nor represent many of the constituents they claim to represent (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Of particular relevance, the most recent U.S. Census data predict that by the year 2024, 44% of college students will come from communities of Color, specifically from African American and Hispanic populations (Hussar & Bailey, 2016). A closer inspection of these predictions suggests that as racial and ethnic diversity increases in higher education, there must be pathways to the presidency established for communities of Color as well as for other minoritized groups (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Hussar & Bailey, 2016).

In the sections below, the experiences of minoritized college and university presidents are discussed, summarizing their pathways to the presidency as well as challenges they encountered. Some of the minoritized and underrepresented groups include women of Color, men of Color, the out gay and lesbian community, and foreign-born individuals.

### **Women of Color College and University Presidents Demographics**

Women of Color, specifically those who identify as Black, Latina, American Indian, and Asian American, account for 40% of the U.S. population, 30% of college and university students, and yet, only account for five percent of college and university presidents (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). Although the percentage of racial and ethnic minority college and university presidents has slowly increased over the last 30 years, women of Color still remain the most underrepresented demographic in higher education presidency in the United States (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Oikelome, 2017).



A number of studies have shown that although there has been increased representation from traditionally underrepresented populations in the presidents' office, representation from Latina women have declined in recent years (ACPS, 2017). Between 2011 and 2016, while White women have demonstrated a five-percentage point increase in attaining presidential appointments, the rate of Latina presidents has decreased by 17 percentage points (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). This is especially disconcerting as data from the U.S. Census Bureau report that between 2011 and 2025 there will be a 59% increase in the number of high school graduates who identify as Hispanic (Hussar & Bailey, 2016, p. 17). Furthermore, exacerbating this disparity, by 2024 minoritized individuals will represent 45% of students attending college (Hussar and Bailey, 2016). In particular, the greatest increase will come from Black and Latino students who will represent a 28% increase between 2013 and 2024 increase for Black students and a 25% increase for Latino students (Hussar & Bailey, 2016). If these data projections are correct, there is an even greater need for increased representation of women of Color presidents in general and Latina and Black women presidents in particular (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017).

### **Women of Color College and University Presidency Pathway to the Presidency**

In attempting to identify factors that may account for how women of Color navigate through higher education, Viernes-Turner's (2007) interviewed three women of Color (Latina, American Indian, and Asian American/Pacific Islander) who were the first ethnic/racial minority presidents at their respective public four-year institutions. As Viernes-Turner asserts, minoritized women have the double burden of racial and ethnic as well as gender stereotypes and discrimination with limited access to mentors that resemble them. As for pathways to the presidency, the women of Color Viernes-Turner interviewed all entered academia via the

traditional route, first with an appointment as faculty members and proceeding through the academic ranks of deans, provosts, and chief academic officers, before accepting the presidency.

Similar to Viernes-Turner (2007), Oikelome (2017) found in her study, *Pathway to the Presidency*, that most of her participants had faculty or provost positions prior to their presidency and that the “traditional academic route is the most prevalent for women college presidents” (p. 31). In addition, Oikelome (2017) found that all the participants recognized the importance of their having a doctoral degree in securing their positions as well as the importance of mentors, and solid experience in the field of higher education administration.

### **Women of Color College and University Presidents Challenges**

In the extant literature, women of Color have unique challenges that other underrepresented populations may not experience (Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Viernes-Turner, 2007). Viernes-Turner (2007) shared that “it appears that gender and cultural difference affect the lives of women of [C]olor in academe” (p. 5) and could be barriers to advancement. Viernes-Turner noted that in spite of women of Color having made tremendous strides in academia, they consistently have to contend with antiquated racial/ethnic and gender stereotyping. Viernes-Turner argues that instead of doing their jobs, women of Color have to consistently dispel incorrect and inaccurate stereotypes and prejudices in regard to culture, accent, and even immigration status. In fact, in her research, Viernes-Turner highlights that women of Color consistently have to learn “how to function in two distinct sociocultural environments, either by drawing on their identity and upholding institutional values (dualism) or by drawing on their identity and working toward the social transformation of their institution (negotiation)” (p. 5).

Recognition of this phenomenon women of Color encounter increases the understanding of their lived experiences. Additional challenges that women of Color presidents face include not being considered for certain positions due to their race, ethnicity, or gender (Viernes-Turner, 2007). Viernes-Turner (2007) further contended that “racial and ethnic stereotyping, gender bias, and cultural differences leading to feelings of dissonance and contradiction in the workplace are the primary themes that cut across the literature focusing on women of Color positions of academic leadership” (p. 7). Still, the women interviewed in Viernes-Turner’s (2007) study shared the importance of believing in themselves, having a unique vision, the opportunities to make a difference in their communities, utilizing diverse leadership styles to bring distinct constituencies together for the greater good, always strive for common ground, and probably of most importance, how essential individual and institutional match are to a successful presidency.

Similar to Viernes-Turner’s (2007) research, Roy (2019) found that there are even fewer numbers of Asian American women in these key leadership positions. Based on research conducted by Huang and Yamatata-Noji (2010) “there were only nine Asian American women who held presidential positions in community colleges in 2010” (as cited in Roy, 2019, p. 106). Many Asian American women experience “implicit stereotyping” and “racial microaggressions” (Roy, 2019, p. 107). Some of the microaggressions Asian American women encounter include the exoticization of their race and ethnicity, such as being idealized as a “geisha or lotus flower” (Roy, 2019, p. 108), which Roy reiterates “demeans their intelligence and capabilities as leaders” (p. 108); minimizing the cultural and even subtle differences between the various Asian America racial and ethnic groups; not being recognized for their achievements or leadership abilities; and, being identified as a model minority/token minority who will not cause any controversy yet who are known for their dedicated work ethic (Roy, 2019).

African American women presidents are not spared from the racism or microaggressions other women of Color presidents encounter. In 2004, Holmes conducted research identifying the experiences of African American women presidents at both public and private institutions. Using a mixed method research approach, Holmes interviewed six African American women presidents as well as utilized the 2002 version of *The American College President Survey* to corroborate the pathways as well as some of the challenges they faced on their pathways to the presidency. The themes that emerged from Holmes's research include the importance of having a village to support you and your success, the stark contrast in representation at postsecondary institutions in the office of the president in particular for women and African Americans, the importance of personal and professional mentors, and the benefits of participating in a professional leadership development program like the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Program. Four of the six interviewees participated in the ACE Fellows Program, and while many of them were qualified, they still felt that a challenge to being a woman president lay in conflicting gender expectations between women and men. For example, while males were lauded for their strong leadership skills and their ability to be aggressive and authoritative when necessary, Holmes (2004) found the same leadership traits were not considered complimentary when attributed to women in general, and Black women in particular.

Jackson and Harris (2007) found similar results to Holmes's (2004) study. Jackson and Harris (2007) interviewed 43 Black/African American female college and university presidents and explored areas of challenges and opportunities. The quantitative research study identified challenges such as "exclusion from informal networks, lack of preparation, and lack of career goals" (Jackson & Harris, 2007, p. 119). The population identified in Jackson and Harris's (2007) study were women presidents at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs),

Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs), and public and private two and four-year institutions. Some of the challenges Black women college and university presidents faced included the lack of role models from the same racial and ethnic group; racial and gender discrimination; microaggressions from colleagues and students; lack of encouragement and support from their peers; challenging board of trustee relationships where Black women were questioned whether they would be a good fit with the institution; and, instances where Black women found other Black women to be more critical than their White peers. For example, the women shared that on their pathway to the presidency, they found their greatest sense of strength, support and fiercest resistance often came from other Black women. Women of Color as well as men of Color college and university presidents encounter similar racialized and ethnicized forms of discrimination.

### **Men of Color College and University Presidents Demographics**

Men of Color, in particular, individuals who identify as Asian American, African American/Black, Latino, and American Indian, are not widely represented in the office of the college or university president (Cook & Kim, 2012; Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). Data from the *2017 American College President Survey* indicate that although the number of men of Color who are college and university presidents has overall increased, the representation is still significantly lower than White men or White women selected as college or university presidents (Gagliardi et al. 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018).

Specifically, data from the American Council on Education (2016) demonstrate that African American men represent eight percent of college and university presidents, Latino men represent four percent of college and university presidents, and Asian American men represent two percent of college and university presidents.

Although African American men have the greatest representation as college and university presidents compared to other minoritized men, their numbers are still not representative of the changing demographic in the United States nor in higher education (Gagliardi et al. 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2018). An important finding to emerge from the ACE survey is that even when one considers the representation of leadership at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or at Minority Serving Institutions, men of Color are still significantly underrepresented in the office of the president. For example, White men represent 43% of college or university presidents compared to 24% of men of Color (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). Research investigating how men of Color successfully traverse the higher education landscape to become college and university presidents is complex and sheds light on the diversity of experiences and pathways to the office of the president (Castro, 2018; Robinson, 2018).

### **Men of Color College and University President Pathway to the Presidency**

As one of the few studies to explore the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse university presidents, Castro (2018) interviewed six male presidents of Color—two African American males, two Latino males, and two Asian American males. In addition to researching how their race and ethnicity factored into their presidential experiences, Castro’s study also added to our understanding of their pathways to the presidency as well as obstacles and the successes of their presidency.

Both Castro (2018) and Robinson (2018) note that the representation of men of Color, in particular African American men, is not evenly distributed across the various types of institutions (public, private, two-year, four-year) but is more situated in community colleges, HBCUs, and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) for various reasons. For example, Robinson’s (2018)

research explored systematic challenges as to why there were only seven African American community college presidents in California although there are 115 campuses across the state of California. After interviewing five of the seven African American community college presidents, the research adds to the body of knowledge regarding issues pertaining to African American male president's journey and pathway to the presidency including racial biases and discrimination they encountered along the way (Robinson, 2018).

As one of the earliest scholars to present research on Latino college presidents, Rodriguez (2005) used a narrative research design to explore the lived experiences of four Latino California Community College presidents. In particular, Rodriguez was interested in college presidents with immigrant backgrounds who successfully ascended to the presidency at various community colleges in California. He employed purposive sampling and explored the personal, professional, and cultural experiences and how they fostered a pathway to the presidency. Some of the common themes that emerged from Rodriguez' research include the powerful influence of family, resilience and strategies to overcome obstacles, the importance of quality mentoring, growth from participation in leadership development programs, and the impact of race, culture, and gender on the presidency (Rodriguez, 2005).

Several themes emerged from Castro (2018), Rodriguez (2005), and Robinson's (2018) research. Some of these themes include the importance of networking, being connected in the right circles, the need to diversify your experiences, expanding your administrative responsibilities, and the importance of increasing your visibility on campus.

### **Men of Color College and University Presidents Challenges**

While men of Color are shielded from the gender discrimination women of Color face, they still encounter racial and ethnic discrimination as well as being personally challenged

pertaining to the validity and rigor of their educational accomplishments (Castro, 2018, Robinson, 2018; Rodriguez, 2005). For example, Robinson found that African American male presidents discussed the racial disparities and inequities that Black men who aspire to be community college presidents in California face. In particular, Robinson's research showed that although there are many excellent and qualified Black candidates, to many the very act of hiring African Americans to be a college or university president is considered a nontraditional strategy as some critics have an antiquated view that Blacks are not considered presidential enough for the position (Roach & Brown, as cited in Robinson, 2018).

In addition to the racial discrimination faced by African American leaders, the study set out to shed light on the hiring disparities African American individuals encountered (Robinson, 2018). Some of these experiences included not valuing or recognizing their educational credentials or not acknowledging their experience or expertise in their field (Robinson, 2018). An important finding to emerge from this study demonstrates that although the participants were qualified for the positions, many acknowledged that often times they were not extended interviews to progress to the next interview stage as compared to their White counterparts (Robinson, 2018).

In *Obstacles and Success of Male University Presidents of Color: A Qualitative Study of Leaders at Public Universities*, Castro (2018) interviewed two current Asian American male college presidents in California and examined their pathway to the presidency. Some of the challenges this particular population faced include the model-minority stereotype where Asian Americans are recognized and applauded for their work ethic and academics; however, they are still considered to be second class citizens or foreigners (Castro, 2018). In addition to the model-minority stereotype, the Asian American college presidents experienced macroaggressions as



well as encountering what is identified as the bamboo ceiling where they encounter resistance when pursuing leadership positions in their place of employment (Castro, 2018). Castro's research further demonstrates that as men of Color, many Asian American presidents were racialized by their subordinates and made to feel like they were not good enough/underprepared, especially by White colleagues and subordinates.

An important finding to emerge from both Castro (2018) and Rodriguez's (2005) research is the targeted hostility Latino and Asian American male college and university presidents encounter. Latino and Asian American men are victims of this hostility from both peers and colleagues as well as from subordinates. These hostilities include subtle as well as overt microaggressions, not having the mentoring opportunities non-minority leaders are afforded, and the challenge of having to work twice as hard as their peers for less pay in order to be recognized (Castro, 2018; Rodriguez, 2005). Similar to previous research (Rodriguez, 2005), Castro found that men of Color who had immigrant backgrounds also experienced racial and ethnic discrimination based on their appearance and accent discrimination based on whether or not they spoke another language other than English (Castro, 2018; Rodriguez, 2005). Out gay and lesbian college and university presidents are also not exempt from the discrimination and microaggressions other minoritized leaders faced.

### **Out Gay and Lesbian College and University Presidents Demographics**

In an effort to demonstrate the changing profile of postsecondary leadership, in 2007, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* published an article acknowledging that at the time, there were three out gay and lesbian college and university presidents. Upon the publication of this information, other out college and university presidents wanted to be acknowledged. Immediately following this revelation, the number of out gay and lesbian presidents quickly rose

to 8. In the summer of 2010, the number of out gay and lesbian university presidents grew to 25 individuals. To illustrate the impact of this movement, in 2010, an informal network of out gay and lesbian college and university presidents was developed, and they formed the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education (LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education, n.d.). To date there are currently over 80 members listed on the LGBTQ Presidents website representing, public, private two and four-year degree granting institutions (LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education, n.d.). The mission of the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education (n.d.) organization is “Effective leadership in the realm of post-secondary education, supports professional development of LGBTQ leaders in that sector, and provides education and advocacy regarding LGBTQ issues within the global academy” (para. 1).

In addition to providing support, the focus of LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education (n.d.) is designed to provide mentorship, leadership and advocacy training to out gay and lesbian college and university president. Based on data from the LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education website, while each year there are more out gay and lesbian presidents and chancellors across the United States, the following states have the largest representation: the State of New York has the largest number of out presidents (13), followed by California (nine), and Massachusetts (eight). While the creation of this organization has proven to be groundbreaking, there is still relatively little research on the life, experiences, and pathway to the presidency for out gay and lesbian college and university presidents due to fear of retaliation and discrimination in their coming out (Leipold, 2014). In fact, the extant literature conducted on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) community has identified this population as one of the most oppressed and marginalized groups as compared to other minoritized communities (Rankin,

Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). The pathway for out gay and lesbian presidents is discussed in the following section.

### **Out Gay and Lesbian College and University Presidents Pathways**

A number of recent works have examined the lived experiences of out gay male college and university presidents and out gay and lesbian college and university presidents (e.g., see Bullard, 2013; Englert, 2018; Leipold, 2014). In *Navigating Straight Waters: The Lived Experience of How Out, White, Gay Males Have Successfully Navigated the College Presidential Search Process*, Leipold (2014) interviewed ten out White, gay males and found many experienced nontraditional pathways to the college or university presidency such as being a staff member or a part of residential life. Other participants in this research felt that being out during the search process allowed them to demonstrate their authentic self and spoke to their integrity by not holding back on something many identified as a part of their core identity. Yet, Leipold discussed how many more found a culture of heteronormativity permeated throughout higher education and they needed to identify ways to work within that context while not hiding or losing a piece of their authentic selves.

Bullard's (2013) qualitative study used queer theory and interpretive phenomenological analysis methodology to explore the lived experiences of six —three gay men and three lesbian women—at both public and private institutions. Similar to Leipold (2014), Bullard found that out gay and lesbian presidents are stymied by the Lavender Ceiling, which is the systematic and institutionalized discrimination towards the LGBTQ community. Bullard noted, “In higher education, the lavender ceiling may be encountered during the tenure process for faculty, or at the advancement stage for a staff member or administrator” (p. 18) and this results in discrimination and microaggressions towards the LGBTQ community. Bullard further argues

that for the LGBTQ community, coming out, could not only lead to a detrimental impact on their professional aspiration and employment but this could also result in a hostile environment where the work culture traditionally defers to the dominant heteronormative milieu.

Bullard (2013) also asserted that while there is a plethora of research on the experiences of gay and lesbian students, his study was the first to look at the experiences of openly gay and lesbian university presidents. Due to the lack of research that focused on his particular population (i.e., gay and lesbian university presidents), Bullard had to resort to using the existing literature on “secondary or parallel” out groups (Bullard, 2013, p. 10). For example, instead of being able to identify research related specifically to out gay and lesbian college and university presidents, Bullard used ancillary research such as LGBTQ faculty and students and existing gender and race theories to support his research.

Built on the groundwork of Bullard’s (2013) research, Englert (2018) interviewed nine out gay and lesbian university presidents to explore their experiences and pathways to the presidency. Englert employed a multi-case qualitative study using queer theory to identify experiences of being an out practitioner in higher education. Englert further explored how being an out gay or lesbian leader impacted the pathway to the presidency and used Queer theory as the framework for his research. Englert noted that as a result of the Lavender Ceiling and the fear of retaliation, the representation of out gay and lesbian college and university presidents is still small.

Pathways to the office of the president are diverse for out gay and lesbian presidents. According to both Bullard (2013) and Englert’s (2018) research they each found that for many out gay and lesbian college and university presidents, while their pathway to the presidency was unintentional and serendipitous, they all knew they wanted to invoke change in academia on the

institutional level. Additional pathways Bullard and Englert found were that someone (e.g., a peer, colleague, friend, significant other) thought this individual had the appropriate temperament to lead in higher education or a unique leadership opportunity presented itself. Based on the results of the qualitative interviews, both Bullard and Englert were intentional in making recommendations of what institutions of higher education can do to reduce marginalized experiences for out gay and lesbian individuals, create a more welcoming environment, and challenge the heteronormative culture on college and university campuses which may lead to a toxic work environment for out gay and lesbian individuals.

### **Out Gay and Lesbian College and University Presidents Challenges**

Many scholars believe the office of the president sets the tone for the campus climate and “adversity in the workplace for lesbian and gays is seen in the ranks of higher education leadership, especially within the role of the president” (Rankin et al., 2010, as cited in Leipold, 2014, p. 41). Although advocacy organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE) have been actively endorsing more diversity in the ranks of the college and university presidency, they note there are structural and institutional barriers that prevent these changes from materializing more quickly (American Council on Education, 2017; Cook & Kim, 2012). Some of these barriers and challenges include hyper-masculine or heteronormative work environments, fear of retaliation and discrimination for coming out, lack of diversity and inclusion training and a toxic work environment (Blumenfeld, Weber, & Rankin, 2010; Masterson, 2011; Rankin et al., 2010). Many other minoritized college and university presidents such as immigrants and the foreign-born population face challenges based on identity and would benefit from campus-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion training to foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging at their institution.

## **Foreign-born College and University Presidents**

Since the 1930s, colleges and universities in the United States have benefitted from the academic prowess and contributions of immigrant and foreign-born scholars (Skinner, 2018). In fact, immigrants and foreign-born scholars play an essential role in the intellectual, political, and educational attainments in higher education and in the United States (Bausum, 2014; Kennedy, 1964). Although the initial influx of immigrants began in the 1930s, as a result of U.S. immigration laws starting in 1965, the United States would begin to witness a significant surge in the number of foreign-born individuals (Bausum, 2014; Skinner, 2018b). While many industries have benefitted from the contributions of foreign-born workers, academic institutions in the United States in particular have benefitted from the contributions of foreign-born faculty, staff, and students and the numbers of foreign-born scholars have steadily increased (Skinner, 2018a).

For example, data demonstrate that not only are academic institutions graduating more foreign-born scholars, these scholars are aspiring to leadership positions such as the campus chancellor and university president (Hussar & Bailey, 2016; Skinner, 2018a, 2018b). Skinner (2018b) notes “while still modest in number, foreign-born and/or -educated presidents are increasingly selected to lead universities” (p. 300). For example, the member institutions of the Association of American Universities (AAU), which was established in the early 1900s “award nearly one-half of all U.S. doctoral degrees and 55 percent of those in the sciences and engineering” (Association of American Universities, n.d., para 1) and approximately 20 percent of the sixty-member institutions are represented by foreign-born presidents (Association of American Universities, n.d.).

In *Globalizing the Academic Presidency*, Skinner (2018b) shares that U.S. higher education in general, and the office of the president in particular, is becoming more globalized.

Skinner shares this is a result of an influx of foreign-born leaders. There are now more foreign-born college and university presidents and chancellors represented at academic institutions in the United States than ever before (Marklein, 2016; Skinner, 2018b). This is the result of many factors. In *More Foreign Scholars Lead U.S. Universities*, Foderaro (2011) notes that “the globalization of the college presidency is a natural outgrowth of the steady increase of international students and professors on American campuses over the past four decades. And it will most likely lead to more relationships and exchanges abroad” (para. 5). Similar to Foderaro, Marklein (2016) notes, “As U.S. universities look increasingly abroad to attract more undergraduate and graduate students, international students increasingly feed the pipeline that leads to top administrative and leadership positions in academia. With few exceptions, foreign-born presidents rose through the ranks of U.S. higher education” (p. 300).

### **Demographics of Foreign-Born College and University Presidents**

Similar to the lack of data Bullard (2013a) found pertaining to research on out gay and lesbian university presidents, there is a dearth of data on foreign-born university presidents, their demographics, and their pathways to and through higher education. While there is no singular organization representing all foreign-born college and university presidents, *Inside Higher Education* publishes a monthly article on new provost and president appointments (Lederman, 2019) and the AAU has a list of its 62 member institutions. In 1992, 18% of the presidents with membership in the AAU were foreign-born (AAU, n.d.). In 2017 that number rose to 23% of all AAU presidents identified as foreign-born and 22% of provosts identified as foreign-born or educated (AAU, n.d.). Further, data from AAU’s 2018 list of members also demonstrate that in 2017 there was a high percentage of provosts who were Indian or of Indian descent (five percent). Additionally, the American Bazaar Wire (2013) notes that there has been an increase in

the number of Indian Americans who are becoming deans, provosts, and college and university presidents. Chitnis (2014) adds for Indians who came to the United States in the 1950s-1960s, they returned to their country; for those who came in the 1970s, many stayed and rose the academic ranks after working decades in academia and are now seeking leadership positions such as provosts, chancellors, and presidents. If AAU diversity trends continue, there will be an increased number of foreign-born individuals who will soon assume the presidency at postsecondary institutions across the United States with India representing the largest ethnic group (AAU, n.d.; American Bazaar Wire, 2013).

Marklein (2016) notes, “While place of birth may not be a deciding factor when search committees look for a new president, a foreign-born status has become a valuable credential, particularly as higher education becomes an increasingly global enterprise” (p. 299). Similar to Skinner (2018a, 2018b), Marklein highlights that as institutions become more globalized, there is a natural assumption that the institutional leadership will represent diverse students and the larger global community. In attempting to investigate factors which may account for an increase in the number of foreign-born college and university presidents, it is important to identify their pathway to the office of the president.

### **Pathway through Higher Education**

Skinner (2018b) indicates that as U.S. society becomes more globalized with increasing international experiences, there will be greater desire and opportunities to hire foreign-born individuals. Skinner (2018) notes, “a candidate who offers qualifications that include active involvement internationally, including study or academic appointment and success in another country’s university, is less of an anomaly to someone whose daily activities include interacting with people around the world and across time zones” (p. 7). This is particularly true for



professionals in the fields of technology and business where teams are comprised of global partners and partnerships (Skinner, 2018a).

Skinner shares that governing boards and search committees are not only influential, but their particular demographic make-up significantly impacts the likelihood of whether or not a foreign-born university president will be selected or not. For example, when the search committee is predominantly White or from within the campus community (insular) with a large number of academics, there is a preponderance of evidence indicating that the candidate selected will not only be an academic but also “from the country in which the university is located” (Skinner, 2018b, p. 7). Skinner further argues that if the search committee is more outward facing, with representatives from the business, technology, and finance industries, there is a greater likelihood that the candidate selected will be foreign-born, yet still an academic. Skinner asserts that those individuals on the search committee with more global experiences, tend to look for more diverse individuals to lead “where globalization long ago became a practical reality” (p. 7).

Skinner (2018b) shares that another important factor in the hiring of foreign-born college and university presidents is the overall internationalization of higher education. This includes an increase in student study abroad opportunities globally, world-wide faculty and scholar foreign exchanges, and the trend of U.S. based universities opening campuses abroad in partnership with a foreign-based education provider. As higher education becomes more global, U.S. academic institutions would benefit tremendously from the diverse perspectives of foreign-born leaders and in particular, those who aspire to be college and university presidents. These diverse perspectives and the contributions of the foreign-born community is the philosophical grounding embedded in the field of asset-based community development.

## Asset-Based Community Development

Scholars and practitioners in community development believe elements of this interdisciplinary field can be traced back to major social movements in the United States and across the world (Haines, 2009). Some of these social movements include the anti-poverty movements of the 1880s that focused on deplorable living conditions for immigrants; the post-development era of World War II as the U.S. attempted to assist in the redevelopment of Europe; and the 1960s civil rights movement inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. designed to improve the lives of marginalized communities (Haines, 2009; Mathie, 2002).

Rooted in social activism and social justice, community development and its subfield, asset-based community development, is described by the extant literature as differing from traditional approaches such as needs-based community development by looking at communities and in this case, immigrant college and university presidents as valuable contributors of knowledge, culture, social capital, and creators of “synergistic co-learning opportunities” (Hilburn, 2015, p. 373) for minoritized individuals such as people of Color, immigrants and native-born individuals (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). Most notable about this approach is that instead of looking at foreign-born individuals through a deficit framework (Harper, 2010), where minoritized and marginalized individuals are perceived to have shortcomings and challenges, an asset-based approach recognizes an individual and community’s capacity, talents, gifts, and resources rather than its deficiencies (Haines, 2009; Harper, 2010; Hilburn, 2015; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996).

When discussing an alternative community development path in contrast to the needs-based or the *dominant deficiency model* pioneers Kretzmann and McKnight (1996) acknowledge that a successful community development process “is defined by three interrelated

characteristics” (p. 27) such as it being asset-based, internally focused, and relationship driven in order to be successful. Further, the grounding principle of an asset-based theoretical approach is to look at the “capacities of its individuals, associations, and institution” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996, p. 25) and the value they bring to their respective community. Kretzmann and McKnight note that in order to adhere to the fidelity of the model, one should “begin with an inventory of the gifts, skills, and capacities of the community’s residents” (p. 25).

My study used an asset-based theoretical framework to explore the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States. In particular, I explored how their cultural backgrounds and traditions prepared them to lead and influenced their leadership. Additionally, their pathways to the presidency and the challenges and opportunities they encountered during their journey to the most powerful position in academia was researched.

By utilizing an asset-based theoretical approach, my research contextualized the contributions of immigrant college and university presidents to their campus community. Some of these contributions included serving as role models for the increasingly diverse and minoritized student population, both U.S.-born and international students (Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011; Manrique & Manrique, 1999; Omiteru et al., 2018; Theobald, 2007); representing an image of a multicultural society (Foote, Li, Monk, & Theobald, 2008; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010; Manrique & Manrique, 1999); leveraging their international contacts abroad to enhance the learning and research experiences of their campus (Manrique & Manrique, 1999; Marvasti, 2005), as well as being recognized internationally for prestigious research awards (Anderson, 2017). In addition, with the unique talent and diversified experiences immigrant college and university presidents bring, there are opportunities to fill leadership pipelines which can significantly influence the demographics of their institutions (Azziz, 2014). I

researched how these individuals maintained their cultural identity and heritage while maneuvering the dichotomies between their roles as a college or university president and an immigrant. Further, this research challenged the dominant monolithic discourse on immigrants and how they negotiate their own space in academe.

In sum, Kretzmann and McKnight's (1996) asset-based theoretical framework of community development was used to frame this research. Specifically, I looked at the capacities, talents, gifts, and resources that foreign-born/immigrant college and university presidents contribute to their respective campuses. My research questions were guided by an asset-based theoretical framework and challenged the dominant monolithic discourse on immigrants and the way they negotiate their space in the office of the president. Furthermore, by immigrating to the United States, negotiating their space in the office of the president, and leading change on their campus, foreign-born presidents are demonstrating elements of resiliency and its nuance for foreign-born individuals.

### **Resilience Theory**

The area of resilience theory can be attributed to the early work of Norman Garmezy in the 1970s and his research on children of schizophrenic mothers to overcome the adversity and trauma they experienced (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy & Ramirez, 1999). Dominated by the field of psychiatry, human development, clinical psychology, and other areas of mental health, resilience theory in its nascent stages focused initially on human psychopathology (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Masten et al., 1999). While the field of resilience has been around for decades, there is still some dispute as to what resiliency means and whether or not one is born with fixed character traits or under the appropriate conditions, resiliency can be developed and cultivated over time (Aroian & Norris, 2000; Greene, Galambos, & Lee, 2004;

Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017). Some researchers believe resiliency is the ability to cope with difficulties in life; the ability to demonstrate success in life despite negative or adverse challenges in life; and, the ability to demonstrate the strength to face challenging circumstances (Aroian & Norris, 2000; Ledesma, 2014; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017). Other scholars such as Masten (2001) describe resilience as “a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228).

In addition to the challenges of identifying the traits of resilience and how they manifest under certain conditions, researchers in the last 25 years have also attempted to identify consistent language when discussing the term resilient, resilience, and resiliency as compared to grit, determination, or other vocabulary that might be used to describe persistence and success despite adversity and experiencing traumatic circumstances (Luthar et al., 2000; Patterson & Kelleher, 2005). Patterson and Kelleher (2005) notes that an additional shift in how academics and researchers analyze and assess resiliency came during 1998 when the president of the American Psychological Association (APA), Martin Seligman urged the mental health community to move away from describing resiliency “in terms of the coping factors needed to survive an array of risk factors, including family dysfunction, disease, illness, and chronic poverty” (p. 1).

This negative association was antithetical to the new direction of the APA and created a novel way for academics, scholars and practitioners to think about resiliency and advocated a move away from what was identified as a deficit model to a strengths model of mental health and well-being (Patterson & Kelleher, 2005).

## **Examples of Immigrant Resilience**

While there is extensive research on resiliency theory, recent increases in global migration trends have highlighted the need to research the resiliency of immigrants (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Rashid & Gregory, 2014). In particular, how their cultural traditions foster a sense of cultural and ethnic identity and results in increased psychological well-being and success in life despite adversity (Anderson, 1987; Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Rashid & Gregory, 2014).

In Cardoso and Thompson's (2010) research on the resiliency of Latino immigrant families, this population experiences "high rates of poverty, inadequate healthcare, low-wage employment, and language isolation" (p.1) yet they identify certain characteristics that are essential to resilient outcomes. These include individual characteristics, family strengths, cultural factors, and community support (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). Cardoso and Thompson highlight that while Latino immigrant families experience risk factors such as discrimination, poverty, and social segregation, "positive ethnic and cultural identity was related to higher levels of self-esteem which weakened the negative effects of discrimination" (p. 1) and other adverse encounters. Similarly, the reinforcement of ethnic and cultural traditions is deemed as protective factors which also mitigate the adverse effects of racism and marginalization which is common among immigrants to the United States (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010).

Additionally, Cardoso and Thompson (2010) reiterate that not only does culture play an essential role in the resiliency among Latino immigrant families, but that cultural rituals have the potential to bolster racial and ethnic identities. Furthermore, Cardoso and Thompson (2010) note that "the accumulation of cultural characteristics, is often associated with greater life satisfaction, educational attainment, healthy behaviors, well-being, and positive family functioning – terms

synonymous with resilience” (p. 2), and similarly, ethnic pride are connected to more rewarding and successful social and community relationships (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Ewing, 2005).

Other research on foreign-born populations have indicated that the toll of migrating to another country has deleterious effects on immigrants however, many remain resilient despite these challenges (Aroian & Norris, 2000; Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Rashid & Gregory, 2014). For example, in *Trauma and Resilience Among Refugee and Undocumented Immigrant Women*, Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, and Cleveland’s (2017) research examines that for many immigrants, the migration and resettlement process can be an extremely stressful situation. In particular, their research addressed the challenges immigrant women faced and how their culture as well as coping and resiliency strategies were paramount to their success in resettling in the United States. The researchers noted that marginalized immigrant women who experienced trauma found pathways such as “strong community, familial and cultural supports or strength” (p. 310) and their participants identified resilience as “a collective process” (p. 310) they engage in with other members of their respective communities and close social support networks.

Other examples of immigrants demonstrating resiliency include Singh, Hays, Chung, and Watson’s (2010) research on South Asian immigrant women. These women, who despite being survivors of child sexual abuse, found that their social location as immigrants allowed them to pull on aspects of their culture for healing. For example, the influence of their ethnic identity, strong family relationships, and sense of hope were areas they relied on to overcome their trauma. In particular the research found that “cultural backgrounds influence the resilience strategies” (p. 445) immigrants use to heal from trauma and other personal challenges. The previously discussed research examines the varied experiences of individuals representing very diverse continents, countries, cultures, and life circumstances, as foreign-born immigrants these

individuals share a common social location and phenomena. Although there are “systems of inequity based upon race, gender, class, sexual orientation, citizenship, language, and other categories of difference” (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. 60) through the face of adversity these immigrants have demonstrated profound resilience and their collective narratives should be shared.

Similar to the experiences of the immigrants discussed, foreign-born college and university presidents share a unique phenomenon. The experience of immigrating to the United States, moving through and up the academic ranks, and leading postsecondary institutions informs their social location and how they navigate their world. Furthermore, it is believed that as a result of their immigration to the United States and various academic achievements, foreign-born college and university presidents similarly demonstrate an aspect of resiliency that is informed by their ethnic identities and cultural backgrounds and distinguishes them from their respective peers in higher education leadership. The study of resiliency in higher education leadership is a developing field. However, Lee (2018) interviewed 10 South East Asian American women who were leaders in the California community college system. Although there was only one college president who participated in the study, the women attributed their resiliency to their strong cultural connection. In addition, the women chose to focus on what they could control which was their attitudes and mindset (Lee, 2018). By focusing on the aspects of their lives that they could control, the women demonstrated more positive outcomes (Lee, 2018). In general, more research is needed to explore how presidents of colleges and universities demonstrate resiliency. However, additional research is needed as well to determine how resiliency is demonstrated in the lives of foreign-born college and university presidents as they negotiate their space in higher education.



## Chapter Summary

While researchers have examined foreign-born populations and immigrant experiences in various contexts, there is a lack of research as it pertains to the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States. In addition to the changing U.S. demographics and a more diverse (Black, Brown, and immigrant populations) higher education landscape, research pertaining to how foreign-born scholars' cultural backgrounds and traditions have prepared them to lead their academic institutions and influences their leadership will continue to prove invaluable in this push to globalize higher education. In summary, this chapter provided an overview of the history of the college and university president, the experiences of minoritized college and university presidents (i.e., women of Color, men of Color, and out gay and lesbian college and university presidents), and finally, introduced asset-based community development, resiliency theory, and examples of resiliency demonstrated by immigrants. While there continues to be a gap in the literature which delineates the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents from other minoritized presidents, this study is designed to address that gap. The next section will focus on the methodology of the study.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

Chapter three provides an overview of the research design of my qualitative study in the following order: an overview of the research questions that guided the study; an explanation of the methodological approach that supported the research; a researcher positionality statement that discussed the experience and social location of the researcher; the participant selection process detailing how individuals were identified and selected; the data collection process outlining the strategies employed; the interviewing process used to secure rich and thick descriptions; the data analysis process which resulted in emergent themes; the document analysis process that was used to verify information; the statement of validity indicating participant verification of the interview process and research findings; and, statement of trustworthiness which was used to establish methodological rigor. The following section will discuss the research questions.

#### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents and how their cultural backgrounds and traditions play a role in their leadership and how it has prepared them to lead. In particular, I was interested in the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents who self-identify as people of Color and their pathways to the presidency, the assets they bring, and how they demonstrate resiliency. There is little if any extant literature on the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents. However, the available literature on other underrepresented presidential populations indicate that college and university leaders who are out LGBTQ presidents as well as men or women of Color are not only greatly underrepresented in this field but also encounter comparable discriminatory

practices from the dominant population. In addition to exploring these experiences, I was interested in how they maneuvered within their pathway to the presidency.

The research was grounded in asset-based community development which looks at communities of Color and immigrant communities to determine the assets they contribute to their community. Assets are described as gifts, skills, talents that individuals have, develop, or use for the benefit of their community. Of particular importance is the intentionality of shifting from a deficit narrative of what the communities lack, to an asset-based discourse highlighting the skills and knowledge present in their community. In this context, the campus was the community but also included the surrounding community (Haines, 2009; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996; Mathie, 2002). The study was also grounded in immigrant resilience. In particular, I was interested in how resiliency is influenced by the presidents' cultures and how the participants demonstrated resiliency in the context of their role as a college or university president.

The research questions that guided this research were:

1. What are the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in their journey to the college presidency and how do they perceive the influence of their cultural background on their journey to the presidency?
2. What strategies and approaches can be identified from the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in navigating the presidential pipeline and advancing to the presidency?
3. How does resiliency manifest itself in the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents?

The goal of this study was to understand the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States; therefore, a qualitative research methodology was used.

### **Methodological Approach**

Due to the nature and goal of my study, qualitative research is most suited for research that aspires to gain deep and complex understanding of the experiences and aspects of the human condition (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As my research goal is to understand the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents, qualitative research “seeks to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 7). Further, unlike quantitative research that uses numbers to draw statistical conclusions, qualitative research uses interviews, focus groups, and participant observation as a means of capturing rich narrative and provides an opportunity for participants to share their experiences in a detailed description with the goal of understanding and describing the experience (Maxwell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, phenomenology was selected as the most appropriate research design for this study.

### **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is the only research design that is both a philosophy as well as a research methodology (Vagle, 2014). Attributed to the works of Husserl, a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher, phenomenology is used when researchers seek to not only understand a phenomenon from an individual’s perspective but phenomenology also seeks to understand how the same phenomena is experienced, understood, and interpreted by many different individuals (Maxwell, 2013; Vagle, 2014). As phenomenology attempts to understand the essence and the intentionality of the experience, and highlights how a phenomenon impacts individuals differently and can be

interpreted in many different ways (Maxwell, 2013). Essence is described by Vagle (2014) as there being “an essential structure to a phenomenon and the intentional relations that characterize that phenomenon” (p. 29). Further, Maxwell (2013) notes that bracketing is essential to the phenomenological process as “our understanding of the world is inevitably our construction rather than a purely objective perception of reality, and no such construction can claim absolute truth” (p. 43). Bracketing is the process where researchers suspend or ‘bracket’ their judgment, preconceptions and analysis of the phenomena while allowing it to unfold and be interpreted in many different ways (Vagle, 2014).

As my study was to explore and understand the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents, phenomenology appropriately grounded the research within the framework of being open to “possible understandings and interpretations, not THE understanding” (Vagle, 2014., p. 18) and provided space for multiple interpretations. The next section will discuss the researcher’s positionality and how this topic was selected.

### **Researcher’s Positionality**

I approached my research as a woman of Color who identifies with my Caribbean, specifically Jamaican background. As a woman of Color, first-generation American, first-generation college student, and higher education practitioner with experience in fundraising, I am aware of the biases I bring as a researcher and how this may influence my perspectives and subjectivity.

For example, through my affiliation with the Student Government Association, African American Student Association, and the International Club as an undergraduate, I had minor encounters with the president’s office. I had minimal interactions with the president’s office in graduate school. It was not until my employment working at several academic institutions in

institutional advancement, did I have any meaningful interactions with the office of the president.

Through these interactions, I came to respect the amount of time and energy these individuals devote to their institution; the amount of sacrifice they make in order to cultivate relationships with donors, alumni, and their boards, sometimes at the cost of spending time with their own family and friends. It was through these interactions that I realized that I had never really encountered a minority, person of Color, or an immigrant in these high-profile influential positions. In fact, many of the top executive positions were held by White males in their 60s, with PhDs who ascended to the presidency through the traditional academic routes—faculty, chair, dean, provost, and or chief academic officer.

While these individuals were accomplished, they also undoubtedly benefitted from their professional affiliations, connected networks, and social capital. An additional distinction is, these leaders did not reflect the communities where the institutions were located. For example, my alma mater, Clark University, in Worcester, Massachusetts is an example of a progressive, social justice-focused institution that is thoughtful and intentional in its approach to community engagement and international development. However, Clark University has never had a woman or person of Color in the office of the president since its founding in 1887. The International Development and Social Change Master's program, of which I graduated, is one of the most innovative, diverse programs I have ever attended. Approximately 50% of my classmates were international students and people of Color. The other 50% were non-minorities who served in international organizations such as the United States Peace Corps or Greenpeace. Further, Clark University faculty are approximately 50% international/foreign-born, highly accomplished academics. Yet, I had not seen that level of diversity or inclusion represented in the office of the

president for any academic institution I have ever attended or have been employed by. Where were the talented people of Color? Where were the talented alumni of Color? Where were talented immigrants? The talented women?

It was during a conversation with the inaugural chair of my doctoral program that I mentioned my interest in researching a topic pertaining to foreign-born individuals or immigrants in higher education. He probed me, as he usually did. I shared that although I was born in the United States, through my experiences with the Peace Corps and as a Fulbright Scholar, both in China, I was particularly sensitive to how immigrants are and have been treated in this country. And, in a very small way, through my experiences, I could empathize to what it means to be an outsider and having to deal with the challenges of not physically resembling the dominant population; missing your family yet understanding that what you have been given is a tremendous opportunity to learn, develop, and grow; and finally, dealing with the challenges of struggling to learn a foreign language when you have an accent and people cannot understand you. It was also approximately during this time that Donald Trump was inaugurated. Once Trump was in office, there was a distinct increase in vitriolic rhetoric directed towards foreigners and immigrants. There was also now fierce arguments regarding building a wall around the borders of the United States, chants of “send them back,” and an increase in racial/ethnic, anti-Semitic violence against immigrants, people of Color, supportive White allies, or anyone who was perceived as different. College campuses were not immune to the violence—Purdue University, Texas A & M University, University of Oklahoma, Texas A & M University, University of Virginia all had their share of violent or racial encounters on campus. Chants of “You will not replace us! Blood and Soil! White Lives Matter!” permeated social media and left people of Color, immigrants, women, and allies of targeted groups feeling vulnerable and unsafe.

My research question continued to develop and I was now interested in foreigners in leadership such as presidents in higher education. I wanted to understand how during such a tumultuous time, were foreign-born university presidents able to negotiate the spaces of civil society and academia when neither environment seemed particularly safe or welcoming for them.

From there, the concept developed into my current research. So, while I was born in the United States, I empathized with the challenges my participants encountered. Yet, as someone who loves to travel and learn about different cultures, I also felt their tremendous joy and excitement when they shared their immigration journey to the United States and how they too love this beautiful, yet complicated country.

The concept of the researcher as the instrument is essential in qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In fact, Ravitch and Carl (2016) state “issues of instrument validity and reliability ride largely in the skills of the researcher” (p. 42). It is important to recognize my social location and the lens in which I viewed my participants and the research content (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Most importantly, as a researcher I also recognize the power I have and to avoid engaging in “interpretive authority” and speaking on behalf of my participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 218).

### **Control of Bias**

As a woman, woman of Color, daughter of immigrants, travel enthusiast, and lover of all things international, I am aware of my biases in support of foreign-born individuals. I am also aware of how this may have influenced my perspective as a researcher. I recognize there is a certain and distinct lens in which I have observed my participants and the research topic. I also recognize that my social location includes my socio-economic status, my personal beliefs and values, and my personal philosophy which provided an additional context in which to interpret



my research. Similar to my participants, as a woman of Color, I too have encountered instances of microaggressions and stereotyping. A few examples include people complimenting me on my English although I was born in the United States, assuming that I am in an online doctoral program, or asking me why I was researching foreign-born college presidents instead of Black women college presidents. I recognize that having shared similar experiences to my participants may influence my perspective therefore I used memos and reflexive journals to allow me to reflect before and after the interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For example, when the participants shared their frustration at having to work harder than their peers and colleagues from the dominant culture in order to be recognized, I could relate to that experience. I could also relate to their examples of microaggressions and overt and covert discrimination they have endured. By documenting these experiences as well as my reaction to them in a reflexive journal, I could process my reaction and how I mitigated any biases (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I also was intentional about not bringing up my background unless I was asked directly about my research interest. This allowed the interview to be focused on the experiences of the participants and not the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The act of journaling was helpful in assisting me to process my bias. The following section will discuss the criterion for selecting the participants.

### **Participant Selection**

The strategy employed for my research entailed both purposeful and snowball sampling. Maxwell (2013) notes that both sampling strategies are effective and appropriate for a qualitative research design. While snowball sampling entails asking participants to recommend peers, friends, or colleagues who fit the research criteria, purposeful sampling relies on the researcher

to intentionally identify and select participants who would make the greatest contribution to the research study (Maxwell, 2013).

Maxwell (2013) outlines five possible goals of utilizing a purposeful sample. The first goal is to make sure that you are able to secure a representative sample for your population. Maxwell calls it “representativeness or typicality of the settings, individuals, or activities selected” (p. 98). Goal two is to be intentional about representing the most diversity within your population and selecting participants with the most variation. The third goal is to ensure that your sample has “extreme case” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 98) that can be used to test the theory. The fourth goal is described as including specific comparisons to highlight the differences; and, the fifth goal, is described as identifying potential participants whom “you can establish the most productive relationship with” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 99).

While the participants are all foreign-born, current immigration or citizenship status were not foci of the interviews. In addition, since the extant research focuses predominantly on the narratives and experiences of White men and White women, this research intentionally identified Black and brown foreign-born college and university presidents who self-identify as people of Color. This strategy was implemented in order to give them a platform to share their lived experiences.

The sampling strategy included the following selection criteria:

- identify as a foreign-born individual or an immigrant;
- currently serving as a foreign-born college or university president (within the last 10 years);
- former foreign-born college or university president (within the last 10 years);
- attended undergraduate or graduate school in the United States; and,

- self-identify as a person of Color.

A year or so prior to initiating this research, I started monitoring *Inside Higher Ed's* bi-monthly column titled “New Presidents or Provosts” by Doug Lederman. Within that announcement, newly appointed presidents, chancellors, and provosts are announced with a description of their former position, their new position, and a link to the press releases created by their institution. I found this resource to be especially helpful and I began to keep a spreadsheet of all the foreign-born/immigrant presidents and chancellors who had been recently appointed.

Within the press releases, the president’s previous employment was listed as well as academic credentials, their country of origin, whether or not they had participated in any professional development leadership programs, accomplishments from their previous employment, reasons why they were selected for the position, and what they hoped to accomplish during their new appointment. Through that strategy, I identified approximately 45 foreign-born/immigrant presidents and or chancellors.

Through additional research, I found the Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. The Alliance was created in 2017 as an offshoot of the Presidents’ Convening on Higher Education and Immigration conference held at George Washington University (Presidents Immigration Alliance, n.d.). Their founding statement notes that they are “dedicated to increasing public understanding of how immigration policies and practices impact our students, campuses and communities. We support policies that create a welcoming environment for immigrant, undocumented and international students on our campuses” (Presidents Immigration Alliance, n.d., para. 1). In addition to providing a supportive environment for documented and undocumented immigrant students and international students and scholars, the

Alliance believes immigrants are valuable to the United States and contribute a great deal to our society. Their *We Believe* statement notes:

We are a nation of immigrants. Our country has benefitted significantly from the contributions that immigrants with drive, ambition and talent have made throughout our nation's history. Our country advances when we remain true to the best of our heritage as a land of opportunity for those who dream of a better life for themselves and their children. (Presidents Immigration Alliance, n.d., para. 2)

Out of the 462 member institutions listed on their website, I searched through the list and found approximately 30 additional names. In addition to searching through the bi-monthly *Inside Higher Ed* series and the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, I reached out directly to a newly appointed foreign-born university president. As a U.S. born citizen, I do not have the same experiences as the participants and therefore solicited feedback from the newly appointed president to determine the value of the research and to garner initial overall support of the topic. This individual expressed immediate interest and support and promised to introduce me to other foreign-born presidents. Via this snowball sampling, where individuals are invited to participate due to a friend, colleague or peer referral, I identified several individuals already included on my list (Creswell, 2013). Through those three strategies, I identified 75 foreign-born college and university presidents/chancellors. While the *Inside Higher Ed* list ensured that these individuals had in fact been appointed within the last 10 years, the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration only confirmed that these individuals were supportive of issues pertaining to immigration. It also did not guarantee that these individuals were still in office. With the 75 potential participants I identified, I sorted the list in order of

name, country of origin, gender, date of appointment, geographical location of their new institution, and names of academic institutions they attended, and the degrees earned.

Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received, each potential participant received an email invitation indicating the purpose of the research and participation criteria. This email was sent to approximately 50 participants (see Appendix A). The remaining 25 were ineligible due to either being in office longer than 10 years, did not self-identify as a person of Color, were no longer physically located in the United States, or they were former presidents/chancellors outside of the 10-year threshold.

If individuals agreed to participate, they received a letter of consent (see Appendix B) and a participant information sheet (see Appendix D) with questions pertaining to the continent where they were born, age range, gender, size of academic institution, languages spoken, how long they had been in the United States., how long they had been a president/chancellor (if they had previously served as a president—how long were they in that role), and religious affiliation, if any. Seventeen presidents agreed to participate in the research, however, one participant had been in office for 15 years and did not meet the eligibility criteria. Another individual did not personally self-identify as a person of Color, and therefore did not meet the criteria of the research. In total, 15 presidents (out of the 50) agreed to participate.

As a way to protect the identity of the participants, the names of slain international human rights, indigenous rights, and LGBTQ rights activists were selected for each participant in this research as a way to honor individuals who lost their lives to violence. The following section discusses the participant demographics.

## **Participant Demographics**

The participants in this study included five women and 10 men. Two of the 15 participants were former college or university presidents. The two former presidents are identified as “Dr” versus “President.” Out of the 15 participants, three are chancellors but will be addressed as presidents in order to protect their identity. Nine of the participants came from Asia, three were from Africa, and three were from the Americas. The participants range in age from 40-70 and have been in the United States between 20 to over 50 years. They are geographically located all over the United States and represent public 4-year not-for-profit institutions, 4-year private not-for profit institutions, and public 2-year institutions. The presidents have been in office between less than one year and 10 years. They also had to self-identify as persons of Color and attended an undergraduate or graduate school in the United States. Consequently, all fifteen participants were physically located within the contiguous United States at the time of the interview. They represented diverse higher educational institutions, regions of the world, and countries. They were also diverse in age, gender, religion, and language. The participants’ demographic information is shown in tables 3.1 through 3.4. Table 3.1 provides demographic information for the 15 participants; Table 3.2 demonstrates the gender of the participants; Table 3.3 lists the region of the United States where the presidents are located; and Table 3.4 lists the institutional data and the presidents’ duration in office.

Table 3.1

*Demographics of Participants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Continent of Birth</b>	<b>Duration in the United States</b>
Dr. Omara Benjelloun	Female	51-60	Asia	30-40 years
President Berta Caceres	Female	51-60	Asia	30-40 years
President Tahar Djaout	Male	61-70	Asia	40-50 years
Dr. FannyAnn Eddy	Female	61-70	Asia	30-40 years
President Farag Foda	Female	61-70	Africa	50-60 years
President Marielle Franco	Female	41-50	Americas	20-30 years
President Rutilio Grande	Male	61-70	South America	40-50 years
President Victor Jara	Male	61-70	Asia	40-50 years
President Jaswant Singh Khalra	Male	61-70	Asia	30-40 years
President Xulhaz Mannan	Male	61-70	Asia	40-50 years
President Iqbal Masih	Male	61-70	Asia	40-50 years
President Chico Mendes	Male	61-70	South America	30-40 years
President Ruben Um Nyobe	Male	51-60	Africa	30-40 years
President Avijit Roy	Male	51-60	Asia	N/A
President Norbert Zongo	Male	51-60	Africa	20-30 years

*Note.* Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect identity. Chapter four will provide an in-depth overview of the participant profiles.

Table 3.2

*Gender of the Participants*

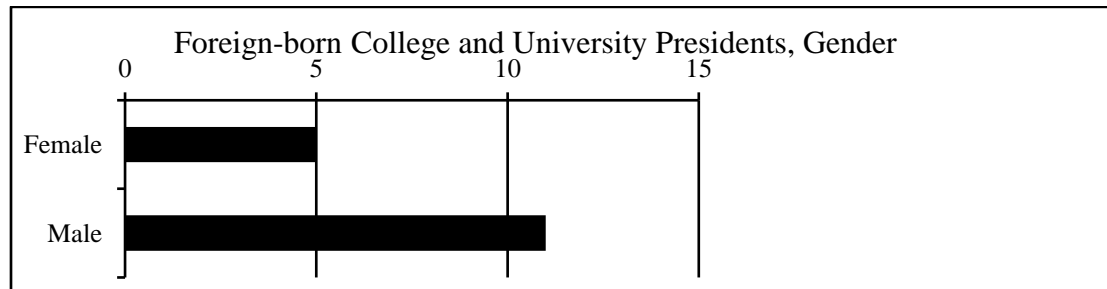
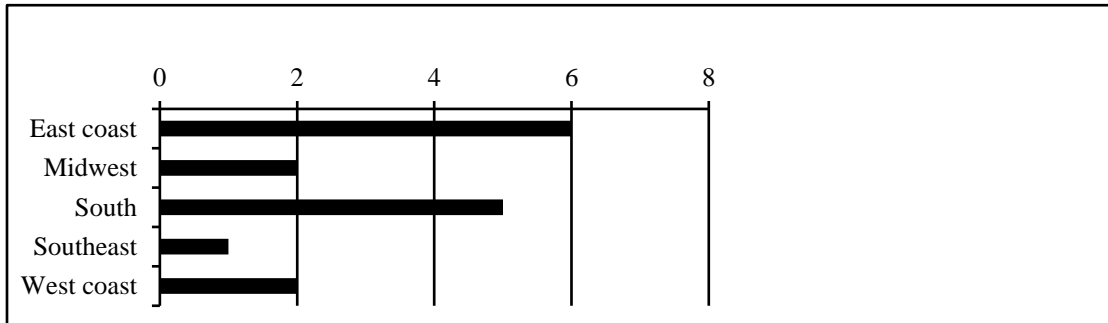


Table 3.3

*Regional Location of Foreign-born Presidents*



Based on interviews, the participant information forms, their CVs, and press releases, Table 3.4 located below provides the presidents’ duration in office, institutional description, and institutional size. Following the table, the data collection process will be explicated.

Table 3.4

*Duration in Office and Institutional Data*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Duration in Office</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Institutional Size</b>
Dr. Omara Benjelloun	Less than 3 years	Private not-for-profit, 4-years or above	2,999 or less Students
President Berta Caceres	Less than 3 years	Public, 4-year or above	5,001 or more Students
President Tahar Djaout	Less than 7 years	Private not-for-profit, 4-years or above	5,001 or more Students
Dr. FannyAnn Eddy	Less than 3 years	Private not-for-profit, 4-years or above	5,001 or more Students
President Farag Foda	Between 7 to 10 years	Private not-for-profit, 4-years or above	5,001 or more Students
President Marielle Franco	Less than 3 years	Public, 2-year	2,999 or less Students
President Rutilio Grande	Less than 7 years	Public, 4-year or above	3,000 to 5,000 Students



President Victor Jara	Less than 3 years	Public, 4-year or above	5,001 or more Students
President Jaswant Singh Khalra	Less than 3 years	Public, 4-year or above	5,001 or more Students
President Xulhaz Mannan	Between 7 and 10 years	Public, 4-year or above	5,001 or more Students
President Iqbal Masih	Less than 7 years	Public, 4-year or above	5,001 or more Students
President Chico Mendes	Less than 7 years	Public, 4-year or above	5,001 or more Students
President Ruben Um Nyobe	Less than 3 years	Public, 4-year or above	5,001 or more Students
President Avijit Roy	Less than 3 years	Private not-for-profit, 4-years or above	5,001 or more Students
President Norbert Zongo	Less than 3 years	Public, 2-year	5,001 or more Students

---

*Note.* Table 3.4 lists the amount of time the presidents have been in office and institutional data.

### **Data Collection**

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States and how their cultural background and traditions influenced their leadership and prepared them to lead. After the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and supporting documents were submitted shortly thereafter. After receiving IRB approval, I began the process of participant recruitment and data collection on December 6, 2019. Ravitch and Carl (2016) indicate that data collection, the process of gathering up information for the intent of better understanding your participants, should be “intentional, rigorous, and systematic” (p. 145); it should also not be rigid and inflexible. In fact, they note that it is the flexibility of the design that facilitates researchers in “understanding and conveying the most contextualized picture of the people and phenomena in focus possible” (Ravitch & Carl,

2016, p. 145). While the majority of the participants were selected through purposive sampling which is especially appropriate for qualitative research methods, a few were also recruited via snowball sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

Prior to initiating the interviews, I requested the assistance of a highly qualified and experienced researcher who provided feedback to strengthen my interview questions, the participant information form, and the interview protocol document. Some minor tweaks such as including ranges for the enrollment numbers as well as the age ranges were made to the interview protocol, and the final revisions were included in the final documents. To ensure there was a diverse representation, presidents (and chancellors) were recruited from many different regions of the country, representing many countries and continents of origin, many different academic fields, with traditional and untraditional pathways to the presidency.

My data collection took place in three separate but interconnected phases. After the participants agreed to be interviewed, they received a letter of consent as well as the participant information sheet. The sheet consisted of demographic questions pertaining to their country of origin, their age range, languages spoken, size of their institution, duration in the United States, duration in their position, gender, religious affiliation, if applicable, etc. While I waited for the participants to return the participant information sheets to me, I began reviewing online documents such as Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which lists institutions' sizes, student demographics, type of institutions, cost to attend, programs offered, etc., as well as any information pertaining to diversity, community engagement, and social media presence of the participants.

Phase two began once the participant information sheet was returned and the interview with the participant was scheduled. I asked each president or their administrative assistant to

provide a copy of their curriculum vitae and the press release announcing their appointment. Some of the participants preferred that I have their biography in lieu of their curriculum vitae; however, some presidents provided me with both the biography and their curriculum vitae. During phase two, I also used that opportunity to review organizational charts and documents that were readily available on the institutions' websites. Phase three included the semi-structured interviews with the 15 participants which lasted between 15 minutes and 67 minutes. Triangulation was achieved by conducting the interviews, reviewing the participant information form, listening to the audio recording, reviewing the press releases, and reviewing the curriculum vitae. Table 3.5 provides an overview of the data collection phases and process, and the next section details the interview process.

Table 3.5

*Data Collection Phase and Process*

<b>Data Collection Type</b>	<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
Participant Information Sheet	1 survey with 11 questions x 15 participants—2 hours			
Curriculum Vitae		Review of 15 CVs or Biography (20 hours)		
Institution Press Release		Review of 15 Press Releases (PR)—15 hours		
Semi-structured interview			Interviews lasted from between 15 to 60 minutes x 15—9 hours	
Organizing semi-structured interviews via in person,	3 hours	4 hours	4.5 hours	

conference calls, and Zoom video conferencing with administrative and executive assistants

Document Review	Ongoing –IPEDS data, institution website pertaining to diversity and /or community engagement, local media	Ongoing – CVs & PRs, organizational charts, and other public, online institutional documents, documents discussing campus and community partnerships— 30 hours	Ongoing- Institutions online BOT documents, social media, Strategic Plan, Mission and Vision documents— 10 hours	
Approximate hours per phase	20 hours	69 hours	23.5 hours	112.5 Total hours

*Note.* The table above describes the data collection phase and the process entailed to secure the data.

### **Interview Process**

Ravitch and Carl (2016) recommend that for qualitative research, the best approach to gain a thorough understanding of your participant is through interviews. The scholars note, “they provide deep, rich, individualized and contextualized data that are centrally important to qualitative research” (p. 146). Prior to the interview beginning, the researcher and the participant greeted one another and then exchanged quick introductions. Ravitch and Carl (2016) note that building rapport with the participants is very important piece in the data collection process.

Although IRB approval was received in early December 2019, due to the holidays and new year celebrations, interviews did not commence until January 3, 2020 and concluded on January 31, 2020. Fifteen one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted either in person, over the phone, or via Zoom video conferencing (see Appendix C). All of the interviews

were recorded using a Zoom professional recorder as well as by utilizing the recording option on the Zoom video conferencing platform. The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided structure but allowed for flexibility where I could ask more probing questions, as necessary (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

One interview took place in person in the president's office and was recorded with the Zoom professional portable recorder. Ten were conducted over the phone using the Zoom professional portable recorder as well as the Zoom video conference recording option with the video off. Four interviews were conducted via the Zoom video conferencing tool with the video and recording options turned on while being simultaneously recorded via the Zoom professional portable recorder. The interviews lasted between 15 minutes to over 1 hour. Creswell (1998) notes that effective research designs may include between 5 and 25 participants but cautions against having less than 6. The number of individuals who agreed to participate (15) aligned with Creswell's recommendation. In addition, the 15 participants not only allowed the researcher to reach saturation based on the research questions, the number of participants also provided the study with rich ethnic, racial, gender, geographical diversity as well as a diversity of experiences.

Since the intention of the research was to gain an understanding of the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents by interviewing participants, the goal was to collect rich and thick data that will reflect the essence of the phenomena or the essence of the experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Further, Ravitch and Carl (2016) reminds the researcher that the process of data collection "is co-constructed rather than just collected" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 111). This means that both the researcher and the participants play an essential role in the data collection process. At the conclusion of the

interview, each participant was asked if they had any questions about the research, any additional questions for me, and or if they needed clarification on any of the questions.

After the first eight to ten interviews were conducted, similar information and common themes began to appear. However, at this point in the interview process, I had several individuals represented from one country, but I did not have enough diverse ethnic and geographic representation from other continents, so I continued to interview. Since the remaining five to seven participants were previously scheduled and my goal was to have a diverse representation, I continued to interview the remaining participants. When I reached the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> interview, I not only had the ethnic and geographic representation I desired, I also began to see elements of saturation appear. Saturation is described as the effect in which no new information can be gleaned from the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Reflexivity is essential to this process and I engaged in memoing and reflexive journaling prior to and at the conclusion of the interviews (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). The following section will discuss the data analysis process.

### **Data Analysis**

Merriam and Tisdell (2009) encourage the researcher to begin the data analysis process as soon as data collection begins as collection and analysis should happen simultaneously. Of equal importance is their recommendation that prior to conducting the analysis, the researcher should engage in bracketing, temporarily putting aside their preconceived ideas or assumptions as well as refraining from judging which is known as epoché. Merriam and Tisdell (2009) reiterate that initially this is an inductive process and becomes a deductive process as you work through the data. As I approached this process, Merriam and Tisdell (2009), Saldaña (2016), and Creswell (2013) guided my work.

Merriam and Tisdell (2009) note that two of the most important elements to the analysis process is to constantly be reminded of the purpose of the research but also to know the kind of coding that lends itself to your particular research design. As I began the data analysis process, I enlisted the help of two Ph.D. colleagues, and I asked them to assist me in coding a transcript and comparing codes. Initial or open coding was the strategy we employed with that initial transcript. Some of the strategies Merriam and Tisdell's recommended include:

1. Think about the purpose and how this will answer your research question
2. Remember the lens that you are using for the framework–phenomenology
3. Begin to code your data (trees)
4. Step back and look at the forest—which is your dataset
5. Go back to trees
6. Develop categories and (axial coding)
7. Continuous process of refining and revising the codes
8. Begin to have buckets of common themes (11:22)

After reviewing their process recommendations, I found Saldaña (2016) provided a more detailed description and rationale for the type of codes that can be used. For the first cycle, I began by initially reading the transcripts and as a word, phrase, idea, concept was presented, I employed anchor codes (Saldaña, 2016). After creating anchor codes, I then began to use focus codes. It was through the use of focus codes that I began to identify some patterns such as the frequency and significance of the codes being used (Saldaña, 2016). It was at this point that I created a spreadsheet with participants' names at the top and each column had their codes. After all of the codes were collected in the spreadsheet, I began to cluster the patterns or the connected themes that began to appear (Saldaña, 2016). Codes with the most frequency were compiled in a

Word document and continued to refine and revise the codes which began to turn into categories. As a phenomenological research design, which focuses on experience and interpretation and the continuous returning to the essence of the experience, in vivo coding and themeing the data seemed to be the most appropriate analysis for the data (Saldaña, 2016).

For the second cycle, in vivo codes were used as a way to “reorganize and reanalyze” (p. Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). Powerful quotes that my participants shared were included in the in vivo coding process. Saldaña (2016) shares that in vivo codes are traditionally used to “honor children’s voices and to ground the analysis in their perspectives” (p. 71) but are also appropriate to use with minority or marginalized groups. My third cycle of coding entailed what Saldaña (2016) calls “themeing the data” (p.200). Themeing the data is described as “an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and or what it means” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 297). Saldaña (2016) also explains that themeing the data is most appropriately used with a phenomenological research design.

Merriam and Tisdell (2009) remind researchers to name the codes and categories from three sources:

1. The researcher
2. The participant’s exact works
3. Sources outside the study (i.e. the literature on your topic; 2:20).

In order to keep track of the analysis developing, a codebook was created which also included a short description of the codes and names of participants attributed to that code (Saldaña, 2016). Similar codes were grouped together, which created categories, and from the categories, themes emerged (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2016).



In developing the codes, Creswell (2013) cautions researchers from creating hundreds of codes which results in intense levels of specificity. Rather, Creswell encourages the researcher to reduce them to 25-30 manageable categories which will result in five to six powerful themes. I had five themes at the conclusion of my data analysis process. The following section will discuss the document analysis process.

### **Document Analysis**

Saldaña (2016) shares that “documents reflect the interest and perspectives of their authors” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 61) and documents “carry value and ideologies either intended or not (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, as cited in Saldaña, 2016, p. 231). In addition to conducting the data analysis process with a word processing system, I also employed the assistance of computer analysis program, Dedoose, to assist with the document analysis.

Dedoose is a qualitative analysis software program that was used to code the institutional documents I received and was also used as a document management tool. Once the documents were uploaded (curriculum vitae [CVs] and press releases) I had the ability to code these documents and utilize them as a form of triangulation. The documents were used to confirm statements from the presidents and verify events. Dedoose also provided an opportunity to help manage the demographic information as a visual representation. It is important to note that although I did upload the participant transcripts to Dedoose, I did not use the coding functionality on the transcripts. In discussion with my chair, he shared that a computer “doesn’t have a soul” and therefore could not generate the same type or quality of themes I would be able to generate by utilizing a word processing tool. I agreed. Therefore, the supporting documents were coded by Dedoose and I coded the transcripts manually using Excel and Word. Table 3.6

provides an overview of the date and time the interviews were conducted. The section following Table 3.6 discusses the importance of validity.

Table 3.6

*Interview Duration Chart*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Duration of Interview</b>	<b>Interview Format</b>
Dr. Omara Benjelloun	January 16, 2020	40:30	Conference Call
President Berta Caceres	January 3, 2020	36:14	In-person interview
President Tahar Djaout	January 17, 2020	14:41	Conference Call
Dr. FannyAnn Eddy	January 29, 2020	21:57	Conference Call
President Farag Foda	January 17, 2020	18:50	Conference Call
President Marielle Franco	January 22, 2020	38:32	Conference Call
President Rutilio Grande	January 10, 2020	38:12	Zoom Video Call
President Victor Jara	January 31, 2020	22:03	Zoom Video Call
President Jaswant Singh Khalra	January 21, 2020	32:24	Conference Call
President Xulhaz Mannan	January 7, 2020	35:28	Zoom Video Call
President Iqbal Masih	January 27, 2020	1:01:00	Conference Call
President Chico Mendes	January 15, 2020	35:23	Conference Call
President Ruben Um Nyobe	January 8, 2020	1:07:01	Zoom Video Call
President Avijit Roy	January 14, 2020	1:00:12	Conference Call
President Norbert Zongo	January 9, 2020	19:51	Conference Call

*Note.* The table above describes the date of the interviews, the duration, and the interview format.

### **Statement of Validity**

Merriam and Tisdell (2009) note that in order for qualitative research to be considered valid, the data collected needed to have been verified by the participants. This is to ensure that subsequent findings are an accurate representation of what the participants shared.

As a form of validity, participants were asked clarifying questions throughout the interview and were asked follow-up questions at the conclusion of the interview to ensure that what was stated was accurate. An additional form of member checking includes contacting the participants to review aspects of the transcript and findings. This is to confirm that their statements were accurately captured. Participants are also reminded throughout the process that they can withdraw from the study at any time. Member checking provides an additional measure that ensures the authenticity of the findings (Miles et al., 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The following section discusses trustworthiness and how it was employed in this research study.

### **Statement of Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, as a means of establishing trustworthiness, the researcher needs to demonstrate methodological rigor (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009). This is achieved by incorporating the following elements in the research design and implementation: confirmability, credibility, dependability, and transferability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Due to the nature of my study and the intentionality in which the participants were selected, in order to address confirmability, I acknowledge that I may have some shared experiences with my participants. To mitigate any bias that may influence the study, I used memos and journaling to document my process and thoughts.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend triangulation as a way to address credibility in your research design. Peers and colleagues reviewed the interview protocol, interview questions,

as well as reviewed and offered feedback on my data analysis and coding process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) share that member checking provides an opportunity for participants to confirm that what was documented was accurate. Participants are also reminded throughout the process that they can withdraw from the study at any time. This provides additional credibility to the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

Per Lincoln and Guba (1985), the element of dependability demonstrates that the findings can be accurately replicated. The researcher must be able to address in detail the process for data collection, the process of maintaining the data, and be able to demonstrate the accuracy of the data. This is accomplished through what they identify as an inquiry audit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data collection process can be found in the proceeding section of this chapter.

The final element, transferability, demonstrates that your research can be applicable and used in other contexts for another population. It is through the inclusion of rich, thick, and descriptive data that transferability can be accomplished. I accomplished this by capturing rich and thick data that provides great detail that other researchers can benefit from (Miles et al., 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

## **Chapter Four: Findings**

This research employed a phenomenological research design in order to understand the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents located in the United States. In addition to identifying as immigrants, participants also self-identified as people of Color (POC). This research attempted to understand and document their perspectives on the path to their presidency. It also explored their leadership philosophy as well as how they demonstrated resiliency in the context of their executive position.

The present study was grounded in the frameworks of asset-based community development and immigrant resilience. The asset-based community development framework challenges the deficit narrative surrounding immigrants which posits that they take from the United States economy instead of what they contribute. Moreover, asset-based community development was used in this research to explore how foreign-born presidents utilize their experience and expertise to improve the outcomes of their campus as well as their local community. In addition, the research was grounded in immigrant resilience. In particular, how resiliency is influenced by their culture and how the presidents demonstrate resiliency in the context of their role as a college or university president. The research also documented the kind of legacy each president desired to leave behind at the conclusion of their appointment. The section below will explicate the participant profiles.

### **Participant Profiles**

It has been established that the participants are immigrants who identify as people of Color; they attended undergraduate and/or graduate school in the United States; and, they have been in their positions less than ten years. Their backgrounds, however, were not the only form of diversity the participants contributed to this study. For example, I discovered the majority of

the participants immigrated to the United States as adults to attend graduate school but three of the participants immigrated to the United States as adolescents with their parents. While many of the participants shared similar narratives, these three individuals had slightly nuanced experiences compared to their peers. This was due to the differences in their formative upbringing, which took place in the United States. However, there were common themes throughout this study, which connected all of the participants.

As discussed in Chapter three, the names of slain international human rights, indigenous rights, and LGBTQ rights activists were intentionally selected for each participant in this research as a way to honor individuals who lost their lives to violence. As a point of distinction, individuals addressed as “Dr.” instead of “President” indicate they are not currently college or university presidents however, they still held office within the ten-year criteria. Similarly, three individuals were chancellors at their respective institution and not technically presidents. Nevertheless, the term “president” was still used for participants as an additional measure of maintaining confidentiality. Finally, the specific countries where the presidents were born are not disclosed. Instead, the continent or region of the world was used as a further attempt of maintaining confidentiality. Below are descriptions of the presidents as well as excerpts of their experiences in higher education as immigrant presidents. The presidents are presented in alphabetical order of their pseudonyms and were asked to describe their leadership style as well as how their culture influenced their leadership. The excerpts below provide an abridged description of those concepts.

**Dr. Omara Benjelloun – Asia**

*My upbringing and the culture that I come from is much more emotional. There is an emotional element to decision making that you sort of cannot park in the parking lot.*

Dr. Benjelloun was between 50 and 60 years old and was a former college president. In her early 20s she immigrated to the United States to pursue a master's degree. Dr. Benjelloun was the president of a small private predominantly White undergraduate degree granting institution in the southern part of the United States. She led this college for a few years and after political and policy conflicts, decided to step down from the position. Dr. Benjelloun indicated that she would be interested in pursuing another presidency if she could discern institutional fit earlier in the presidential search process.

**President Berta Caceres – Asia**

*One thing my background did was to provide a deep respect for education. And I think that's probably the biggest thing. Not just education for its own sake, but there's a deep love of learning.*

President Caceres leads a large public research university located in the southern part of the United States. President Caceres has been in office for less than five years and immigrated to the United States from Asia when she was in her early 20s. President Caceres reflected that she has lived longer in the United States than she had in her own country. As an administrator, President Caceres has learned to take joy in the accomplishments of her staff and believes the most effective teams are grounded in respect and trust. While her tenure at this university was still relatively new, President Caceres was a strong advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion programs that benefit the whole campus and advocated for allyship with underrepresented populations.

**President Tahar Djaout – Asia**

*I can't get anything done by myself. And no matter what grand vision I bring, it really takes all of us to get it done.*

President Djaout leads a private, not-for-profit institution located in the Midwestern part of the United States. President Djaout has been in office for less than seven years and believed his Middle Eastern background, which relies on negotiation and diplomacy, has been instrumental to his success in academia. After securing his Ph.D., President Djaout attempted to return to his country, but the political revolution prevented him from doing so. An accomplished fundraiser, President Djaout believes campus morale can be influenced by a positive attitude.

**Dr. FannyAnn Eddy – Asia**

*I think it's harder for minorities and women because of all the dysfunctions. I don't want to walk into anything as challenging as I walked into where I was president.*

Dr. Eddy was a former college president from Asia who was based in the northwestern part of the United States. Dr. Eddy served in that capacity for less than five years. Due to complex and competing issues and interests, including a feuding Board of Trustees and National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) violations, she resigned from her position. In reflecting on her time in office, Dr. Eddy felt that although she was not able to accomplish all of her goals during her tenure, she felt proud that she was able to make incremental systematic changes. She also looked at her time in office as one of tremendous personal and professional growth.

**President Farag Foda – Africa**

*I'm fairly direct and that's very cultural. They know where they stand. They never have to guess.*

President Farag Foda has led her institution between seven to 10 years. As one of three individuals who immigrated to the United States as an adolescent with her parents, President Foda acknowledged that although she was an immigrant, she identified more as an American. However, President Foda recognized that her culture significantly influenced her leadership.



President Foda's university is a private 4-year institution located in the Midwestern part of the United States. President Foda has described her journey to the presidency as an "accidental tourist" and believed her success is a direct result of her being open to the opportunities presented to her.

### **President Marielle Franco – The Americas**

*When times get hard, I remember my ancestors. We defeated Napoleon's army and that was a pretty big feat.*

President Marielle Franco was between 40 and 50 years old. When she was an adolescent she was brought to the United States by her parents. President Franco was highly accomplished, driven, and dedicated to the mission of higher education. As a Black woman and an immigrant, President Franco felt that the resiliency she demonstrated is a result of her cultural background and the expectations set forth by her family and mentors. President Franco has served as the leader of her institution for less than five years and has described her role as consistently trying to identify resources and leveraging opportunities in order to improve academic outcomes for her students. President Franco was also one of three individuals in this study who had held multiple presidencies.

### **President Rutilio Grande – South America**

*Some people tend to think that once you get to be president you own the institution. No, you do not. You work for the institution and you work for the people in the institution.*

President Grande has been leading his institution less than 10 years. As the only president who had a student affairs background, President Grande was a risk-taker and worked diligently to increase access to education for all populations but especially the large Hispanic population in his city. His institution was located on the east coast and was a public institution in an urban

setting. President Grande was proud that he had been instrumental in diversifying the university leadership and believed this intentionality is not only important, but necessary in order to better serve his students, their family, and the larger community.

**President Victor Jara – Asia**

*I bring diversity to their campus and the community and that's not just the ethnic diversity...it's more of a different way of thinking.*

At less than three years in office, President Jara was one of the recently appointed presidents. His institution was a large public university located in the southern part of the United States. As a first-generation college student, President Jara felt that his role was to intentionally provide educational access to traditionally underrepresented student populations. He also recognized that as an immigrant, he cannot lead by decree but instead took a more collaborative and diplomatic leadership style.

**President Jaswant Singh Khalra – Asia**

*My style is enabling and empowering. I just want to enable and empower everyone and control no one.*

President Khalra led a public very high research institution on the west coast. As an accomplished scholar and scientist, President Khalra employed somewhat of a Socratic leadership style with his administrative team. He believed that in order to secure budgetary requests or approval for any initiatives, administrators should be prepared to debate their position. He considered this leadership approach a direct result of his cultural background where friends and family debated in an effort to sway opinions and political stances. President Khalra regarded this as an effective way to ensure team members are empowered to identify creative solutions.

### **President Xulhaz Mannan – Asia**

*The Academy is a collection of very talented and strong-willed people. And, they just don't do something because you tell them to do something.*

President Mannan led a public institution on the east coast. As a former department chair, dean, and provost, President Mannan was a strong advocate for faculty scholarship and engagement. While President Mannan did not grow up wealthy, he acknowledged that he was very fortunate for the minimal resources his family did provide. Although President Mannan grew up speaking English in his country, he recognizes that he still has an accent and noted that we as a society need to move past accent discrimination as we can learn a great deal by speaking to someone with an accent.

### **President Iqbal Masih – Asia**

*In many ways, working in a factory shaped my leadership and management style and how you work with people...how you respect them and treat them with dignity.*

President Masih was the president of a public institution on the west coast. While a Ph.D. student, he was asked many times to teach graduate level courses and always declined. It was not until his personal friend and mentor needed him, that he accepted his invitation to teach. He recalled this opportunity as his gateway into the academy and lamented that he had not tried teaching sooner. President Masih used this as an example of why he was now open to different opportunities and reflected that this strategy has served him well in higher education.

### **President Chico Mendes – South America**

*Don't lie. Don't discriminate. Don't bribe. A report is a report and do not misuse accounting.....no funky accounting.*

President Mendes was the leader of a public institution in the south. Having spent the majority of his professional life in business working in Asia. President Mendes brought a unique perspective to his role as a college president. While President Mendes was proud of his accomplishments, he was most proud of the high moral standards that guided his work as well as his time leading strategic efforts in Asia.

#### **President Ruben Um Nyobe – Africa**

*The tribe from which I come...it basically comes down to you having to leave a legacy.*

*Each and every person has to leave a legacy...one way or another.*

President Ruben Um Nyobe was the president of a public institution on the east coast. President Nyobe continued to maintain strong cultural and familial relationships in his country and often traveled there with faculty and staff. Most recently, President Nyobe extended an invitation to local officials to join him in Africa. President Nyobe leveraged that opportunity to develop international trade agreements between the local city government, his institution, and his tribe. President Nyobe was a noted scholar and believed that his culture mandates that as president, he must serve the people he leads.

#### **President Avijit Roy – Asia**

*Multiplicity would be another theme that I would definitely say I take from my culture... life*

*is not singular...culture is not singular.*

President Roy was the newly appointed leader of a private not-for-profit institution on the east coast. As someone who enjoyed the complexity and nuances of culture and technology, President Roy was excited about serving his institution and collaborating with the community to bring more diversity to campus.

## **President Norbert Zongo – Africa**

*In my culture, we work very hard. I learned from my parents that character is when you do things that others don't see you do...you always strive to do the right thing...all the time.*

President Zongo led a public institution in the southern part of the United States. As a young adult, President Zongo felt pressure from his community to select a traditional academic discipline but soon realized it was not an appropriate fit. Once he focused on a discipline that he enjoyed, he found great joy in the learning process. This experience proved to be invaluable for him as he leads an institution with many diverse and hardworking students.

The 15 participants provided detailed narratives outlining their experiences as foreign-born college and university presidents located at an institution based in the United States. These interviews included a description of their experiences immigrating to the United States, their pathway to the presidency, their leadership style, how their leadership was influenced by their culture, examples of the assets they contributed to their college and surrounding community, and the resiliency they demonstrated along the way. In the section below, I provide two to three thick descriptions of the themes and subthemes of the research that represent the essence of the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted.

### **Overview of Findings and Themes**

The sources of data consisted of a participant information form, semi-structured, audio recorded interview, participant curriculum vitas, and press releases. Other supporting public documents made available on institutional websites or social media were used to corroborate and verify certain events such as presidential inaugurations, commencement dates, international and

local city partnerships, and other pertinent data points. This research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in their journey to the college presidency and how do they perceive the influence of their cultural background on their journey to the presidency?
2. What strategies and approaches can be identified from the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in navigating the presidential pipeline and advancing to the presidency?
3. How does resiliency manifest itself in the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents?

Through the research, five overarching themes developed that are illustrated in Figure 4.1. While these main themes guided this research, subthemes emerged as well.

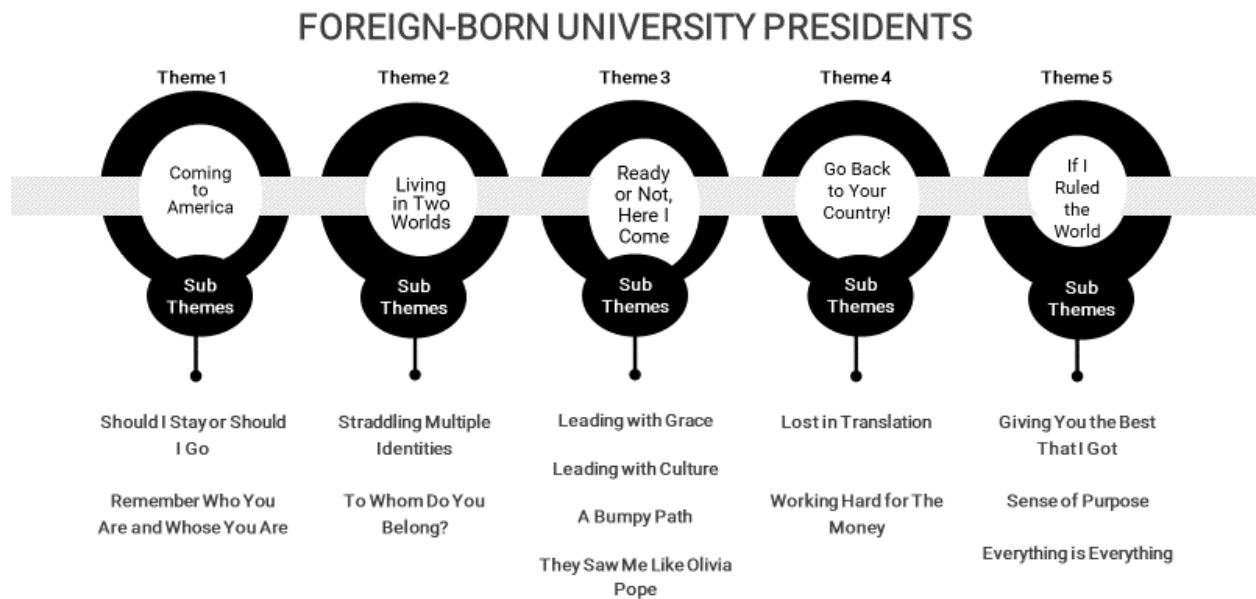


Figure 4.1. Foreign-born University Presidents.

## **Coming to America**

Theme one emerged out of attempting to answer the first set of research questions: (a) What are the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in their journey to the college presidency and (b) how do they perceive the influence of their cultural background on their journey to the presidency? In order to have an understanding of the lived experiences of the foreign-born college and university presidents, it was important for the participants to discuss their reasons for immigrating to the United States as well as who or what influenced their decision. They also shared the circumstances occurring in their world at that time.

For example, when President Djaout was asked what influenced his decision to leave his country, he stated, “A revolution was happening in my country. The country was taken over by religious fanatics who are still in charge.” President Jara shared that he grew up during a cultural revolution in his country, “My secondary education was disrupted several times because of the chaotic situation in the country and because of the fact that the family was being persecuted.” The experiences shared by Presidents Djaout and Jara indicated that at times decisions to immigrate were not by choice, but rather by circumstance. The impact of a war or political instability such as revolutions were significant push and pull factors.

Similarly, the families of Presidents Grande, Franco, and Foda also experienced political and economic oppression in their home countries and were brought to the United States as adolescents. President Grande shared, “I was too young to have anything to do with the decision. In the late sixties, the political situation in my country was a little rough. During the 1960s and 1970s in Latin America, it was not exactly easy times.” President Foda recalled:

It was a socialist government in place and they confiscated everything my parents had and they said, “It's not worth that. Let's go. If this is how our country treats us, let's get

out of here.” So, they left. Sort of the typical immigrant story of fleeing oppressive governments and starting over again.

President Franco shared that even though she was an adolescent at the time, she remembered the situation surrounding their reason for immigrating. She stated, “I came with my family.... My country has had a long history of political instability. They came because of the political unrest and the economic instability.” The impact of immigrating to the United States as an adolescent was especially difficult for Presidents Grande, Foda, and Franco. Presidents Grande and Franco recalled the challenge of having to adjust to life in the United States during their formative years.

Some of the presidents left their countries to pursue a better education in the United States. Dr. Benjelloun left her country in order to secure a Ph.D. in a more structured academic environment and to also live out her individual freedoms. In the following excerpt, she discusses her rationale:

In my country, a Ph.D. program can take many years. Whereas in the United States, if you do your work, in four to five years, you can complete your Ph.D. That was one of the reasons I left... also, the pressure to get married and start your family at the age of 18, 19, 20 is very high....and I was already 21. If I stayed there, the pressure to marry and start a family would be felt much stronger. I wouldn't have been able to devote the time to my education and the future. So, I decided “out of sight, out of mind” and then I wouldn't feel those pressures as much being in the United States.

President Khalra looked at the United States as an opportunity to live out his desire for academic and personal freedom. He noted, “I was more oriented towards the American notion of individual freedom and seeking your own destiny rather than the notion that your destiny is predetermined.” This philosophy of individual freedom is something that continues to influence the lives of Dr.



Benjelloun and President Khalra. They both continue to devote time and contribute to academic scholarship in their respective fields. In addition, all of the presidents shared that they recognized the tremendous opportunity immigrating to the United States provided them and how this changed the course of their lives. The following section discusses the first subtheme.

**Should I stay or should I go?** For many of the presidents, the United States was known as a land of opportunities, however, strong family ties and obligations made leaving their country of origin more challenging. This first subtheme addresses some of the challenges the presidents faced as they decided whether to leave their respective countries. President Masih, whose family was impacted by the British Partition of 1947, wanted to pursue his education, but lamented leaving his small and close family. This decision was also especially difficult for him to leave his father who exhibited signs of trauma from surviving the devastating event:

I had a relatively small family. My two parents, my sister and I. We didn't have anyone from my dad's side except his mother who is my grandmother. Most of his relatives or friends either died when the country split up or stayed on the other side. I think it is still one of the bloodiest types of separation at least in modern history. The reason I mention my dad is because in many ways that did impact me quite a bit.

For President Nyobe, while he wanted to attend university in his home country, internal political unrest curtailed his opportunity to finish his degree. After waiting close to a year for the political conflict to subside, his mother told him he needed to look at other options. He recalled:

My dream at that time was to get my college degree and be a teacher in high school. There was political strife at that time and they sent us home from university. We went home and during that 10-month period when they were closed. My mom said, you have four years of college education but you don't have a degree. Why don't we look for

options outside (of the country) to go and get your degree? My friend was in the United States and he said, “have you considered American universities?” The truth is, I hadn’t. President Zongo discussed the strong relationship he has with his father and how his understanding of the world continues to influence his life, “My dad has been my hero....he always told me, son, where ever you go...make sure you make it better than you found it.”

The influence of a parent or loved one was a particularly emotional piece for the presidents. While President Masih struggled with leaving his family, especially his father, Presidents Nyobe and Zongo found their greatest influence through the support and encouragement of their parents. While some of the presidents immigrated to the United States to begin new lives as adults, there were some who were brought here as adolescents, and still more who had family members and loved encouraging them to immigrate here for a better life. The following section describes the second subtheme.

**Remember who you are and whose you are.** In this subtheme, each president acknowledged the overall importance of their culture and cultural identity. For President Franco, she was very much aware of how her identity as a Black woman and immigrant and how this is influenced by her cultural background. She highlighted this point:

I know that my cultural background helped me. Being an immigrant, you have to be very entrepreneurial in many ways. You don't have things handed to you. You have no roots here...whenever times get hard, I remember how hard it was for the people who brought me here.

Dr. Eddy also looked at the United States as a place full of opportunities but recalled the difficulty she faced in leaving her family. In particular, her mother and grandmother were very

instrumental in her upbringing and fostered her love of education. I asked her to share her experience and she said:

My sister and I were always conscious of the advantages my mother and grandmother didn't have compared to her own brother. I would say that narrative in my family has been very much a part of my upbringing and education...the importance of education in having a successful personal and professional life.

President Masih felt the same way yet frequently reflected on the personal loss his father experienced and how that directly impacted his own worldview:

Maybe there was something at the back of my mind that I had to prove... something as a first-generation immigrant. Both my parents are now gone. But they sent me here, and frankly, they expected me to come back. They were hoping...and it was hard for them particularly since we weren't a big family. It was hard for my dad who had lost his own family... so to sort of lose his son too....and so maybe at some level it was that I had to prove something to them for myself.

Presidents Masih and Franco and Dr. Eddy shared their immigration experiences through a lens of sacrifice. Through the sacrifice of their families who had to take out loans or had to pool their money together, these presidents immigrated to the United States and changed the trajectories of their lives.

### **We Live in Two Worlds**

Theme two emerged out of attempting to answer the second research question: (a) what strategies and approaches can be identified from the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in navigating the presidential pipeline and advancing to the presidency? The theme of living in two worlds is one that is woven throughout the body of the study. Nearly all of the

participants mentioned some variation of this phraseology. Most frequently, the term had been used to highlight the multiplicity of worlds that a foreign-born college or university president resides in such as coming from another country yet now residing in the United States as well as the reality of being an immigrant but also leading an academic institution. The phrase was coined by President Nyobe who still attends to family, cultural and political obligations in his home country. To further emphasize the point of living in two worlds, President Nyobe came from Africa where polygamy is still acceptable. His paternal grandfather had three wives and they produced nearly twenty children. While this is not his current practice he does recognize and respect his cultural background and every day he attempts to navigate and negotiate through these worlds. Each morning President Nyobe awakes at 5am to attend to his tribe's business and at 8am he transitions to his role as the president of his university. This cultural duality is experienced by many of the presidents and they recognize it as valuable trait and a distinction they bring to the field of higher education and their respective institutions. President Mannan noted:

By living in two cultures and across two cultures, is an asset without question. This is why we all really strongly advise and should work towards having more diversity on campuses. It does open everyone's eyes and it's not just simply for the people helping international students come here, but our own native students really need that exposure.

Dr. Benjelloun also shared her perception of living in two worlds where there are competing interests and expectations at play. She noted:

I think there's two different things. I think two elements are at play here. One is, you are an outsider coming into higher education in the United States which is a different world, but you are also a woman and a woman of color. You're not just an outsider because

you're not from the United States, but you also then have affinity with the minority population which may be very different from your own culture.

The theme of living in different worlds is one that was discussed by all of the participants and highlighted the challenge of being an immigrant and negotiating through the nuanced world of academia as well as the racialized and at times hostile society in the United States. For many of the presidents, this concept of living in two worlds was even harder as they recalled the loved ones they left in their home country and at times not feeling fully embraced by the communities they serve. However, each of the presidents felt as though their institution was a much better place as a result of the diversity they brought and they felt they were developing more global citizens.

**Straddling multiple identities.** The first subtheme that emerged from theme two looks at the complex and sometimes competing identities foreign-born college and university presidents embody. The phrase “straddling multiple identities,” coined by Dr. Benjelloun, has been used to highlight the multiple identities she felt she had to navigate. Some of the identities included being a woman, a woman of Color, an immigrant, and a minority. Dr. Benjelloun explained it as:

I think two elements are at play here. You are an outsider coming into higher education in the United States, but also, when you come in as a woman and a woman of Color, you're not just an outsider because you're not from the United States... You also then have affinity with the minority population. So, you sort of straddle multiple identities.

President Caceres shared her experience as the first immigrant, woman, and woman of Color to lead her institution in a traditionally White, male dominated field:

As president, I'm the first woman, the first person of Color, and the first immigrant. So, they all became blended. And, I don't know which one is a bigger challenge at which

point. When I first moved here a man said to me, “Why do they call you a woman of Color? You're not black.” And then calls over a Black woman, an African American and said, “Ask her,’ ‘Should she be called that?” We gave each other a hug because we both were like, okay, we get this.

President Caceres shared Dr. Benjelloun’s sentiment in the challenge of negotiating these multiple identities. President Caceres further added that foreign-born individuals “must be careful not to let the dominant culture divide you or pit other minorities against one another.” I asked her to elaborate and she gave this example:

There was a gentleman who said, “We think Asian people who come here are fantastic because you come here with all these problems and look how successful you are.” And that was him clearly saying that the Latino/Latina community and the African American community, like what is wrong with them? And I think that's the trope and we cannot fall prey to that.

For President Masih, he shared the challenge of having to negotiate between the worlds of being a faculty member and transitioning into the world of university administration. He shared that:

I have wondered if it would have been better going to a different institution because you are not saddled as much with the past. Maybe from a cultural perspective and maybe it was a combination of my own cultural roots and combination of the unique circumstances that my respect for people sometimes really got in the way of change.

President Masih shared the difficulty in maneuvering through and up faculty roles and administrative leadership space and the difficulty it can pose when you now lead individuals who were once your co-workers and the challenges and awkwardness it presents. Many of the presidents shared their experiences in straddling multiple identities but also the challenge of

being identified as a token or model minority as well as negotiating the “minority space” with other people of Color but being especially careful not to villainize other immigrants or communities of Color.

**To whom do you belong?** The second subtheme that emerged under theme two was To Whom Do You Belong? As foreign-born individuals, college and university presidents have a keen and distinct understanding of the importance of feeling connected, valued, and the importance of a sense of belonging. President Jara shared that even though he has lived in the United States for many decades, because he did not grow up in this country, he still finds that he has difficulty fitting in. Dr. Benjelloun shared that her identity as a foreigner allows her to really empathize not only with other international students but also students of Color who may feel disconnected from higher education. She recalled her experience with understanding the importance of feeling connected:

I understood what it meant to be on the outside. I’ve always sort of been on the outside. When people talk about a sense of belonging and our students not feeling like they belong in academia, or the institution isn’t set up to be welcoming to them, I totally understand that. When you come from a different culture, you sort of notice things in different ways than if you belong to the dominant culture. You’re much more sensitive to culture...and to expectations... and to cultural norms... and fitting in and not fitting in.

For Dr. Benjelloun, she recognized the importance of belonging and how a lack of connectedness, could adversely impact students of Color, immigrant student groups and other marginalized populations in higher education. While Dr. Benjelloun recognized that she did not attend high school or undergraduate in the United States, as an immigrant, she was intimately acquainted with feeling like an outsider and being reminded of her foreignness.

President Franco also recalled how not fitting in has impacted her on a personal and professional level. She recalled, “There've been times when I've lessened myself to make people feel less uncomfortable. But, as I get older, I realize, this is your issue. You figure it out. I'm going to show up as who I am.” When asked to elaborate, she added, “I'm going to be empathetic. But, it's not my responsibility to make your ego feel better because you haven't done the work and you haven't struggled as I have.” This powerful statement attests to how challenging it can be for immigrants of Color when there is a perception of a lack of belonging. Presidents are attempting to find creative ways to address this issue and not only for their students but faculty and staff they work with. For example, President Caceres mentioned an ancient prayer that she and her teacher used to recite to one another when she was a child. In reflecting on what belonging means and how she chooses to lead, President Caceres stated:

Before every class, a teacher and a student recite a prayer together. It's secular and nondenominational. And I never really thought about the meaning of it before but it means “may we be protected, may we be safe as we are studying, may we be nourished as we are, may we enjoy the process of learning, may we achieve, may we work with great energy, may we achieve great things together. And when we are done with the process of learning, may we part with no bitterness towards each other; may we not hate each other.” So, in many ways I think of that not just as a leader but as a teacher or as groups working together. It's not, “I teach you throughout.” It's “may we all do these things together” so maybe that influences that we tried to do our best. I hope that teams that work with me feel we're in this together...it was the original safe space.



The participants shared that in these increasingly polarizing times, it is especially important to cultivate a culture of belonging on their campus. Even as presidents, they could still recall the visceral feeling of not belonging and what that experience meant for them.

### **Ready or Not Here I Come—Pathway to the Presidency**

Theme three refers to the realization that the majority of the presidents interviewed were not explicitly seeking their current position. However, in the course of their work as faculty and or mentors to junior faculty and graduate students, they were identified and encouraged by colleagues, administrators, or mentors/mentees to seek leadership positions. Some of these positions included chair, dean, faculty senate, provost, and other positions. When asked about her journey to the presidency, President Foda remarked, “My path to the presidency was as an accidental tourist. I thought, how can I impact higher education more broadly? So eventually someone asked me to apply for a couple of university presidencies and I did...that's kind of history.” When asked to discuss his journey to the presidency President Nyobe said, “To tell you the truth, I never really expected to become a college or university president.” Likewise, President Franco recalled:

I never aspired to be a college president. People I know, my mentors and folks who've met me said, “You know, this would be a great path for you. You have the skills. You should do that.” It took me a while before I developed the confidence and saw that I could actually do it.

President Khalra’s story is similar to Presidents Foda and Franco. He provided further insight into how the role of the president is perceived. He noted:

If you had asked me, “would you ever be the president?”, my answer would have been a categorical “no.” Not because I had decided I didn't want to be, but because it was clear

to me there was a certain personality and a persona that you had to be in order to be in that position.

President Roy acknowledged that higher education is still an elitist and privileged enterprise. He noted:

There is a bit of tremendous insecurity in the institutional settings. That meant that people would often hire people who looked like them and the people who came from similar affiliations and pedigree...other people from privileged backgrounds. And, so all of that was also painfully clear in the (hiring) process.

While nearly all of the presidents were not looking for their current position, they have embraced their role and are excited for the opportunity to make institutional changes. When asked, President Caceres laughed and said that she did not think she wanted to be a leader at a university but after having been provost and then elected to be executive vice chancellor, she stated, "That was a good feeling because all of my fellow provosts, my fellow deans asked if I would step up and lead them. And so, then I realized that a president really has the power to shape a university."

**Leading with grace.** This subtheme of theme three emerged out of the question, "What is your leadership style?" and provided an opportunity for the participants to discuss their style as well as the expectations they have for the people they lead. Dr. Benjelloun expressed that her leadership style was much more situational as it depended on what the team or situation called for:

I adapt to what the needs of the moment are and the needs of my team are. Of course, everyone aspires to be an inspiring leader, a transformational leader. But, to get to be a transformational leader you have to adapt and you need to know what type of leadership,

a situation warrants. I've been a coach when the times have warranted that. I have been just a team member where we all brainstorm and we come together and the best idea emerges and I've had to be a captain where decisions have to be made. And as the leader, ultimately after listening to everyone and their positions, the decision is mine. Somebody has to make the decision.

Many of the presidents identified their leadership style as that of a servant leader where they are in a sense serving the institution and the people they work with and lead. President Zongo shared that, "I view myself as a servant leader because I don't ask people to do anything that I wouldn't do myself. I'm a people person and I like to be involved." President Mannan also felt that working in higher education warrants this type of leadership approach:

The Academy is a collection of very talented and strong-willed people. They just don't do something because you tell them to do something. You have to convince them it's important to do. And, so in that sense, you have to model your behavior and you have to be in service to these talented and opinionated people who are capable of doing a lot of things. Then, how do you facilitate their work and hence the work of the institution? I think the best model for an academic leadership position is the servant leader model.

President Nyobe also felt that a servant leadership approach aligns with his cultural identity:

It is my responsibility, for everyone that I come into contact with, to make an effort to make that person's life better...and that is cultural. We believe that you have to do that. If you don't do that, then you are not making the world a better place. And even in the small things, the small tasks, you have to do that. I have to always improve. I have to strive and your life will be better. It's a form of democracy that you have to share your wealth. And as a professional, I take that into consideration when working with my staff. I have an

executive team I work with and I try to let them understand that we are a team because you have to share the responsibilities and share the glory.

President Caceres' leadership style was very similar in scope to President Nyobe's in that she recognized that as a leader she must be ok with sharing the joy:

I realized as dean how much good I was doing...that if I were a stronger researcher or a stronger teacher, I would have said, "my contribution is my own." I had a wonderful mentor who said to me, "Do not become an academic leader until you're ready to take as much joy in the contributions of others as your own." Because as a professor, I was an outstanding teacher, researcher or consultant. It was all about me, but once you become a leader, you don't have the time anymore. You have to take joy in other people's work.

President Jara shared the fact that he's an immigrant impacts how he leads. He explained:

I guess people in my country almost demand cooperation there. At least the culture is like that even though the current government is very dictatorial. But in society, people expect you to be very collaborative and cooperative. I think that has influenced my leadership style which is really to lead through influence. As a first-generation immigrant or new immigrant, it's just not possible to be very demanding and manage by decree. I think that doesn't work well for presidents who are not born in this country.

For President Jara, he was referring to the challenge of coming from a dictatorial country where everyone does what they are told without question. He then juxtaposed that with leading in a democratic society where an authoritarian rule would not be appropriate nor accepted in higher education.

Others such as Presidents Franco and Foda took a more direct approach to their leadership style and also attributed it to their cultural identity. President Franco notes:

I would definitely say that I'm very candid. I am no nonsense. I get right down to it. And I think being Caribbean, we say exactly what we think. Sometimes it takes people by surprise how candid I can be. To me, I see no other way. I mean, of course, it offends people sometimes. It shocks people initially. When they want transparency, they can't believe how much transparency they get from me. But that's just the way I am. That's the way I lead. And eventually they realize, "wow, we appreciate that. She's a breath of fresh air. She doesn't bullshit." My "yes" is a "yes" my "no" is a "no." My "I don't know" is really, "I don't know," and there's nothing to it.

President Foda's statements concurred with President Franco's: "I'm fairly direct and that's very cultural. They know where they stand. They never have to guess. They're not worried about any agendas. I would say that's a very, very strong part of my culture. Very direct with everybody."

The presidents demonstrated diverse leadership styles that were representative of their personalities and how they viewed their role in their institution. While most tended to align with what they described as a servant leadership model, others described a shared governance model, situational, and transformational leadership styles they have used as motivational strategies.

**Leading with culture.** This subtheme emerged as a result of asking the participants how they thought their culture impacted their leadership. While some of the participants initially shared that they did not think their culture impacted their leadership and believed they were two separate entities, they all reflected and recognized that their culture very distinctly impacted their leadership style. President Foda initially discussed why she did not think leadership and culture were related but through discussing her rationale out loud she came to a realization that they are connected:

These questions are kind of difficult to get your head around. I don't think of myself as my culture does that...I think that is my values and I can think of my values. I guess those are related to my culture because I get them from my family who are also immigrants.

As President Foda, recognized this connection, she recalled and shared other aspects of her culture and how it has influenced her leadership.

For President Khalra he described his leadership style as more Socratic and looked forward to his subordinates challenging him in a respectful way. He described his leadership as:

I want to have a conversation with people who report to me or who I'm making a decision with. We go back and forth, back and forth and it reads more like the court system where you argue your case and argue back and then get to the answer that's right. And I think that leads to better quality decisions.

When I inquired if he had always had this leadership style or if it is something he had recently adopted as president, he pondered for a moment and said:

Let's think about it. This could be cultural because a lot of conversations and growing up in my country are based on arguments. When you are arguing with and discussing issues with your friends, argumentation is the base of the conversation. It's not just you sharing your opinion. You argue and they are challenging your opinion and then giving you their opinion. It's like what the Italians would be doing. But, oh, wow. Now that you're pushing me, I can see that that probably is influenced by how I grew up.

By asking President Khalra to dig deeper into his cultural background, he and I both reflected on the significant influence it had on his success as an administrator and how he identified as a leader.

President Grande shared that being an immigrant is a very valuable asset he brings to his presidency. He noted:

Understanding that there is this cultural wealth in the communities and we just have to tap into it in order to understand it. And again, if we want to embrace the students and make them successful when they come to our campus, we should be providing them with support services that reflect where they come from. And I always joke about that...we should have some rice and beans in the cafeteria.

President Grande was referring to the need to meet the students where they are, providing them with the resources to be successful but also on a basic level, recognizing that some of the most powerful connections are through food and also by leveraging cultural wealth. With a background in student affairs, President Grande provided a very unique perspective in how he leads his institution and the central role students play.

President Djaout shared that his cultural background is evident in how he leads. He stated:

My culture is friendly and kind to people as we're being people-oriented. We are soft on people but hard on policy. Those have served me quite well. Especially, diplomacy and negotiation because the job of the president is probably 50% negotiations and 50% diplomacy.

President Djaout was quick to note that he worked hard to find that balance between negotiation and diplomacy, however he attributed his success as well as to his positive outlook and leading people with dignity and respect.

President Caceres goes back to that poem that was read and recited to her as a child. The poem discusses the need to respect one another and to work towards the greater good together:

I hope that teams that work with me feel we're in this together, we're safe...where we can make mistakes. "May we take care of one another; may we enjoy the process." So, don't dread coming into work— no toxic environments. And then the idea is that we leave with goodwill towards each other. We may not like everything, but we say "I give you the benefit of doubt and you give me the benefit of doubt."

While the presidents have been in the United States between 20 to over 50 years, they all relied on some aspect of their culture to help them lead. Some presidents relied on verses and prayers they recited as children, others recalled how their culture influenced their communicative and negotiation styles, while others, reflected that their whole essence and being is a result of their cultural identity. In discussing the influence a president has to shape a university, many of them shared that it was not without its challenges. Below, the presidents shared some of the challenges they encountered on their path and how they attempted to mitigate some of them.

**A bumpy path.** As I interviewed the participants, I was particularly interested in some of the challenges they had encountered on their path to the presidency. This subtheme addresses some of those challenges. Dr. Benjelloun noted that:

Once one finds their voice and you find people who are champions, who are mentors, who help you along your way, I think the challenge became on a much larger context to be taken seriously. Both as a woman, as a woman of Color and as an immigrant woman. It became a matter of "Well, you don't fully understand higher education because your higher education experience was in another country, right?"

Dr. Eddy reflected that it is her experiences as a foreigner that provided her with the insight to connect with the students on a deep level:



Well, I do understand the challenges because I see my students go through some of those challenges and I went through some of those challenges in my own country. So, I think those are some of the barriers...to be taken seriously. But, “will there be more questions asked? Will she get us? Will she understand us? Will she be able to stand up to us, especially being a woman? Will she be able to stand up to the bullies in academia and, and so on.” So, those were the challenges on my path.

Dr. Benjelloun and Dr. Eddy were very transparent in discussing their roles as former presidents, In addition to the lack of feeling connected to their institutions, they also shared the importance of institutional fit and how that could make or break a presidency.

President Khalra further shared this sentiment and stated that while the search committees were supposed to demonstrate diversity, it was very superficial. He shared that “the search committee, who’s supposed to reflect the community, are rarely diverse and even when they are diverse, they’re not that diverse. There’s a power dynamic, a lot of nuanced stuff that you see by just interacting with them.” Similarly, President Franco recalls that in order to be successful in higher education, as a Black woman and an immigrant, she has had to become more unassuming in order to get things done. She stated:

One of the things that I've found as a Black woman and as a high achieving, powerful black woman, and an immigrant woman...it has helped me to be unassuming, right? If people know your full power, they're going to come at you all guns blazing. But if they underestimate you, they don't come all guns blazing and you can read them.

President Franco, she shared that quite often not only is she the most educated person at the table with the most experience, she is often the youngest and that comes with other challenges.

President Franco shared that at times, she has had to lessen herself in order to make other people

comfortable and to not be perceived as a threat. Many of the other presidents shared a similar sentiment of being highly educated (all of the presidents have a doctoral degree [14 PhDs and one EdD]) as well as being perceived as a threat.

**They saw me like Olivia Pope—Crises management.** This subtheme emerged as a result of the participants indicating that they were hired to fix, fix up, clean-up, address or mitigate an issue or several issues on their campus. Some of the presidents also shared that what was disclosed to them during the interview and or contract negotiation phase was in fact far worse than they realized. The subtheme “They Saw Me Like Olivia Pope” refers to the TV show *Scandal* where the protagonist, Olivia Pope, known as a Gladiator in a Suit, is adept at mitigating crises and essentially cleaning things up.

President Franco introduced the term and how she saw her role:

The institution where I was, there was quite a bit of tumult at different times and every time those things happened, somebody got fired, somebody left. It was always like, “Can you take this on?” And I never said no. And I always excelled and people knew. They saw me like Olivia Pope...if she's here, she's doing a cleanup job. So, I would clean things up, get them on the right track and I did that all the way to the top. When the last president left, we had a state investigation on a number of things that were going on. And I was the person who got things done.

In this respect, President Franco was identified as someone who was a problem solver. This was not exclusive to her. All of the other presidents were identified as problem solvers with innovative solutions who demonstrated a balance between their temperament and their drive.

President Grande recalled that his institution struggled as well: “We had issues with sexual violence. We had all sorts of issues with campus like student riots and then even with the

New England Patriots winning games.” President Khalra concurred and stated, “When I came to campus, the campus was very divided, right? The Latinos, the African Americans, the Asians were all very divided.” Dr. Eddy discussed her presidency and the fact that the issues she inherited were a great burden. She noted:

When I went to the college, there were a lot of issues. There were accreditation issues, we were in trouble with state department of education, the US department of education.

There was an NCAA investigation and violation regarding scholarships, and it ended as the board of trustees were actually fighting each other. There were two groups fighting for control of the board and who served as a governance committee. I didn't know all this. I was nominated for the presidency. I knew about the accreditation issues and I knew that they could tell that I'm an academic. So, I went in with the mission and didn't realize that there were a lot of challenges.

While many of the presidents felt like the crises they were hired to “clean up” was possible, two former presidents (Dr. Eddy and Dr. Benjelloun) shared how these issues resulted in their stepping down from the presidency at their respective institutions.

Dr. Eddy recalled this painful time:

I think to some extent and this is just a sort of assumption of mine. I think they saw me as an Asian woman, likely to not, be assertive in any way. One of the guys on the board on the first day said, “Look, you don't need to pay any attention to any of the financial parts of things. I will sign off on them if the CFO would sign off. You don't need to sign any of the papers.” And I said, “As president I'm responsible and I absolutely have to sign off as the CEO of the institution. I have to sign off on them.” So, things like that. They just

assumed they were getting someone who was going to be a sort of “yes” person...not a real president.

Dr. Eddy shared that while it was a very difficult time for her, she felt like she made incremental changes. Dr. Benjelloun reflected on her experience and noted:

People thought, “Oh, now she will address all the issues. A woman of Color coming from the global south, which was colonized by the British. She can help fix it.” But I think the expectations and the burden that I felt that was placed on me when I had to be president for everybody, both my students of Color and our white students and the thousands of alumnae, which are primarily white and mostly from the South...It was just a burden that sort of at the end of the day broke my back.

In this instance, Dr. Benjelloun felt as though she was unprepared for her role as president. She felt like nothing could have prepared her to address the complex issues she inherited. However, Dr. Benjelloun was also very hopeful and looked forward to another opportunity in leading a college or university in the near future. The crises management issues that the foreign-born presidents inherited intrigued me. I did additional research and found that the predecessors for all fifteen foreign-born college and university presidents were all White and from the dominant culture. All 15 foreign-born presidents replaced a White predecessor. Out of the 15 predecessors identified, 12 were White males and 3 were White females. It is important to note that while the White predecessors may not have been directly responsible for the issues the foreign-born presidents inherited, these issues occurred during their tenure, and the foreign-born presidents have been expected to “clean up” and or “fix” what they have inherited.

Based on information shared by the presidents, I have compiled a list of the type of crises management issues the immigrant presidents inherited. It is worthwhile to note, that some

presidents inherited multiple crises at one time. Table 4.1 included below provides an overview of the kind of crises management issues the presidents had to address. The following section discusses the fourth theme and its impact on the participants.

Table 4.1

*Crises Management Issues*

---

Athletics eligibility scandals	Labor strikes
Athletics scholarship scandals	Losing accreditation
Black Lives Matter Movement/ All Lives Matter Movement	Mismanagement of grant/ foundation funds
Dealing with social justice issues on campus	Public relations gaffes
Declining student enrollment	Race relations
Faculty discontent and low morale	Sex scandals
Feuding Board of Trustees	Sexual assault/violence
Financial mismanagement	Student activism
Greek Life/ Hazing scandals	Transitioning and gender reassignment/ student challenges
Issues with State Department of Education/ Federal DOE	White supremacy/swastikas on campus/nooses on campus/ black face

---

*Note.* Above is a partial list of the issues the foreign-born presidents inherited.

**Go Back to Your Country!**

The fourth theme is a result of difficult discussions I had with the participants pertaining to their identity as immigrants in a racialized society. These individuals shared the reality of the bias, discrimination, stereotyping or microaggressions they have encountered. While all of the presidents may not have had this phrase shouted at them or may feel that they have not experienced overt discrimination, many of them recognize that some of the discrimination they encountered was more overt. As contributors to our communities and in particular, educators, the presidents shared this difficult aspect of being a foreigner. They reflected that even after being in the United States for more than 20 years (and some 30 and 40 years), they were still oftentimes seen as outsiders. The first subtheme is discussed below.

**Lost in translation–Accents, biases, and microaggressions.** This subtheme emerged from asking the presidents, “What are some of the challenges you have encountered on your pathway to the presidency?” Most spoke about the challenge of speaking with an accent, but others addressed what they identified as unconscious bias, microaggressions, and instances of stereotyping. President Franco recalled the challenges she encountered in learning English:

English is not my first language. So, there were people who were clearly racist. So, going back to microaggressions. They would use these idiomatic expressions and say, “Oh, well I’m going to say this because she doesn’t know what this means or you know, it may be difficult for you to understand this” and then they still go on and say it anyway and don’t try to explain it.

Not only did President Franco feel that this was disrespectful, she wanted to reiterate that an accent is a sign of multilingualism which is considered an asset across the world. She also shared that this is a form of microaggression where individuals who feel threatened use these tactics in an attempt to level the playing field.

President Grande recalled when his accent was thicker and he stated:

Being an immigrant, coming from a different place...especially at the beginning when my accent was very thick. People think that you are dumb because you speak with an accent...That you don’t understand or whatever...you have to learn to respect people for who they are and then respect everybody.

For President Grande who works with large marginalized populations on his campus and his city, he is very intentional about how immigrants should be treated and the value they bring to our society.

President Mannan shared that while his English is better than it was, regardless of our language ability, we all have something to contribute. He stated, “Don't be intimidated or annoyed by somebody with an accent. Pretty soon you get used to the accent and then you can see beyond that. And you'll say, ‘Oh gee, there's so much to learn from this person.’”

President Mannan who had somewhat of a British accent as a result of his country being colonized, recalls the importance and value in speaking multiple languages and how that contributes to his concept of global citizens.

President Nyobe recalled a more recent interaction after he was selected and appointed to his current position. He recalled:

When I came for this job, at the end of the first year I had dinner with some trustees. I found out after I got the job, he said, “I didn't think you were the right person for this job, but then later on when the group got together and we started talking, I realized that anyone who interacts with you won't forget you.” So, I said, “What changed your mind?” And he said, “Well your accent.” And I said, “I've been here for 35 years and my accent is part of who I am.” I know of some people who tried to change their accent to fit in but I'm not going to change my accent. I am who I am.

For President Nyobe, he recognized his accent as an important aspect of his identity and refused to change this about himself. The presidents all viewed their accents as a trait or characteristic that distinguished them from their peers. However, it was also viewed as a badge of honor and as the ability to communicate with many different people.

**Working hard for the money.** This subtheme is a result of presidents indicating that as immigrants and people of Color, they feel as if they always have to work harder just to be considered for certain positions and sometimes just to be considered “somewhat” equal.

Both Presidents Foda and Khalra indicated that while they have had to work harder than their peers, they do feel as though it is connected to their upbringing as immigrants as well:

President Foda stated:

I would say that for the immigrant community, one of the messages I think most immigrant communities get is, is, you have to be better than everyone else to be viewed as equal. I think we definitely got that message growing up.

For President Foda, her family instilled in her the importance of working hard but there was also an expectation that things would not be handed to her or her family.

President Khalra concurred that immigrants work hard and due to their limited social capital networks, they have to find creative ways to succeed. He noted:

I came on a one-year visa. I had no idea if my stipend would be renewed. So, there's a whole lot of uncertainty you live with when you come here. And, when you're working hard you have to work a little bit harder than others.

All of the presidents shared they felt they had to work a little harder than their peers from the dominant culture. This was especially true in areas of professional development opportunities, mentoring, and in developing social and professional networks.

President Masih reflected on whether the same would be true of an American going to his country to work and believed that they would encounter the same challenge:

It appears to me that I had to work a lot harder than perhaps someone who was from this culture. Particularly a white male competing for the same point. I never thought about it when I was going through it and I just thought that was the normal thing to do. But, to be fair about it, you know, I am not using it as a justification, but I've reflected that what if someone were to come to my country, would they have to work twice as hard. And, I



always come back to the same answer ... “yes.” As a first-gen it just appeared to me that in every position I was in, I had to work harder to prove that I was worth it.

For President Masih, he was certain this was not exclusively because he was an immigrant in the United States. He felt everyone would have to struggle a little harder if they immigrated to another country and tried to make a living.

President Grande felt that having to work harder is not exclusive to him, but to many immigrants, especially Hispanic. He stated, “99% of the immigrants that come to this country, come to work hard. The press and political environment sometimes have this myth that the immigrants come just to get welfare and to take jobs from them. That's absolutely false.”

President Grande recalls that the immigrants in his city and on his campus are the hardest working people he knows. He recalls that discussions he's had with parents who just want a better life for their children. The exact same thing, he reminds me, that everyone else desires for their children. He continued:

I go downtown and I see people that are coming in at seven in the morning while I'm going down to get a cup of coffee. They are coming down for the third shift and that's the second job or third job that they have. They go home to sleep for three hours, they go back to work in a different place, and they are just working really hard to make sure that they can provide for the family. So, there is a lot of energy and a lot of hard work. And at the same time, there's a lot of hope. And I think especially the families that we deal with that have younger children or high school students or college students... that they have hope, they have hope in the future.

President Grande along with the other presidents shared that while they recognized they worked harder than many of their peers, to a certain extent they expected to. Where they found their

greatest challenge was not being recognized for their educational attainments, language abilities, and academic/scholarship achievements when colleagues with lesser accomplishments and credentials received promotions and they were significantly less qualified.

### **If I Ruled the World**

The fifth theme emerged as the presidents discussed what they have or would like to accomplish during their tenure. This theme is based on the wishes, dreams, goals and aspirations the presidents shared for how they would like to transform their campus and how they feel they are living out their purpose. This final theme addresses the research question, (a) how does resiliency manifest itself in the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents?

In discussing his vision for the campus, President Khalra shared that while he cannot make huge political changes in the United States, he can change his world (his campus) to make it a better place for his students. He shared that although the previous president was a woman, his institution had never had a woman dean. That was until he got there. He noted, “Today five out of 10 deans are women. And, my cabinet was all White people. Even though we've had a woman president before me. Today, more than 50% of my cabinet are women and LGBTQ.”

President Khalra was very proud of this accomplishment and continuously looked for other opportunities to diversify his administrative leadership. President Grande felt similar to President Khalra and indicated that through his leadership, he could make huge impacts on campus and enhance the lives for many people on his campus, He enthusiastically shared:

I have been quite instrumental in diversifying the campus and the workforce. I have had the opportunity in appointing a number of our vice presidents. And, actually before that, when I started as vice chancellor at my last institution, and in all those years I have

appointed only one white male. Everybody else has been a female or a person of Color. You know it takes a little bit of intentionality and you do find the best person for the job. I have a CFO that was a white male and he was the best person for the job. The enrollment management person was a female. I appointed the first female chief of police and my vice president for diversity and inclusion is a Latina. My vice president for enrollment and student affairs is an African American. My chief of staff is a female. So, that's something that I intentionally work on.

For President Grande, diversifying his campus as well as his cabinet and administrators was a tremendous accomplishment for his institution.

President Djaout shared that he works hard to bring positive change to his campus and was recently honored with a national award. The award recognizes immigrants who have contributed to their communities in significant and powerful ways. President Djaout decided that instead of sharing what he had accomplished, he used that platform as an opportunity to share what he still hoped to achieve while president:

I ask myself, “Am I contributing to our country here in the U.S.?” My diversity, as a person of Color was significant because people look at me—students, faculty, and staff and they say, “Hey, if he made it, I'm sure I can make it.” And it's true. If an immigrant can make it, you're the president of the university, a lot of other students and faculty and others feel inspired to do that too.

In this respect, as a positive role model, President Djaout was demonstrating that his students could achieve this success as well. In fact, all of the presidents referenced some aspect of mentoring or being a role model for students of Color and other immigrants.

**Giving you the best that I got—Assets.** After describing the context of asset-based community development and inquiring what assets the presidents felt they contribute to their campus and surrounding community, the subtheme Giving You the Best That I Got—Assets developed. The responses described are accomplishments, gifts, skills, and talents the participants contribute as it relates to their identity as a foreign-born college or university president. For example, Dr. Benjelloun recalled that during her tenure, her international connections were extremely valuable and resulted in strategic partnerships that her institution would not have been able to secure without her facilitating that relationship. She remarked that:

I was connecting with the community, bringing in global opportunities, I think adding to the mission, understanding what it truly means to be global citizens, exposure for our students to become global citizens, diversifying the academy, with both international students and a more diverse student body.

Dr. Benjelloun further noted that these opportunities were not limited to only the college campus but had long reaching impact in the larger community as well. She recalled that under her leadership, her administration was “expanding international recruiting, opening new opportunities with international partnerships, with institutions. So, I definitely opened up many avenues and opportunities.” For Dr. Benjelloun she was proud of what she was able to accomplish in less than three years. She also felt that she is not unique. As foreign-born individuals, she highlighted the many talents and attributes foreign-born presidents bring to their campus.

President Jara discussed that not only does he contribute ethnic diversity to his institutions, he also contributes a diverse way of thinking about complex issues. He noted:

We all carry our biases, because the way we were brought up. As a result, we all think differently, and we all see the same objects from different angles and draw different conclusions. I think my contribution really is talking to my cabinet. They would provide an observation and the conclusions from their angle. And, many of them are from the majority culture and many grew up here and having been here for several generations. While I bring the viewpoint and the angle and the conclusion from someone who has not had the privilege of growing up here. So, I think that diverse viewpoint is perhaps the biggest asset that I would bring to a discussion.

This diverse viewpoint has served President Jara well and he believed has contributed to his success in academia and life in the United States. He shared that he was often the only minority at the table and could bring a perspective that set him apart from peers in the dominant culture. President Mendes recognized that his ability to work with many different people is a strong asset. He shared:

Working in China, working in Australia, working in India, Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, the whole shebang for five years was major, a cultural calibration, so to speak. All of those experiences got me the opportunity, really the privilege to work with different races, different ethnicities throughout the five years I spent in Asia.

President Mendes' unique experience of immigrating from South America yet living in Asia and managing a large multinational company for five years set him apart from other candidates. This was also evident in his work ethic and his ability to motivate his peers and colleagues.

President Khalra discussed the public programs he has built which he believes has developed stronger community partnerships as well as more academically prepared students. The program consists of a partnership between his university, the public libraries, and the rideshare

service providers Lyft and Uber. High school students take the car service to the public library where they take math and writing courses for a few hours each day over the summer. He described it below:

We currently have about 15 different locations in the community, in the library and we run these summer courses. I figured that you come to this library location for four or five hours a day and you'd take a course in mathematics and writing because these are two indicators or as a success in college. We know that now many of these students are from low income, single income backgrounds. So, what we do is we give them access to transportation. You take an Uber or Lyft, come to the library and you take the same Uber or Lyft to go back and the bill shows up for us to pay. We get the bill directly. The student has nothing to pay so we are able to prepare these students after they're admitted, but before they enroll at our institution. It's good for them. It's good for us. So, we work with a lot of underserved communities to offer courses. We send our TAs, to teach the high school students.

For President Khalra, he was proud of his ability to leverage the partnerships in his city for the greater good of promising future students. He was also proud of his creativity in problem solving and working within the established institutions without having to create a new initiative.

Like President Jara and President Khalra, President Caceres believed being an immigrant brought a unique perspective. She noted:

I think one asset that any immigrant brings is the ability to see things through other people's eyes and not to take things for granted because everything is new. I think if there's a first-generation college student, I find that I can relate to them better because I know what it's like to walk into an environment where everything is new. And so, I think

that's an asset. I think that empathy is an asset because you realize the struggles that other people face and maybe curiosities because you get to question things because you didn't grow up with it. Like why do things have to be this way?

For President Caceres, in addition to a diverse perspective, demonstrating empathy is also an asset she is proud of. President Caceres along with many of the other presidents, utilized this ability as well as the importance of treating individuals with dignity and respect as a way to create positive change on their campus and reframing the deficit language used towards immigrants and other marginalized populations.

President Nyobe reiterated the close partnerships he has been able to develop between his campus community, his tribal community in Africa, and the local community in his city. He noted, "I think one of assets is that we serve as role models not only for underrepresented students but for other international students who come to our campus. And I've had a number of students come to me say, you know, if you can do it, it encourages me that I can do it too." Similarly, to the other presidents, President Nyobe looks for opportunities to mentor and give back to his campus and surrounding community.

As faculty, deans, provosts, department chairs, leaders in academic affairs, student affairs, and advisors to student groups, the presidents in this study have tremendous reach or "spheres of influence" by their connection and affiliation nearly 60 academic institutions. These presidents have and continue to have tremendous reach and influence in higher education.

**Sense of purpose–Resiliency.** The subtheme of Sense of Purpose—Resilience emerged from resiliency as one of the frameworks of the study. Participants were asked to discuss how they demonstrated resiliency in the context of their role as a college or university president. When President Caceres was asked to describe how she has demonstrated resiliency, she noted:

I think just to come to another country and be successful demonstrates a certain resiliency, right? You go somewhere where typically you don't know anybody, where you don't have money. So, a lot of research on resiliency shows that there are many elements to resiliency, but one of them is a sense of purpose. And that can be a good thing and a bad thing for many of us as immigrants. And the more of those categories, the more non-normative you are, the better, the bigger the pressure is, which is, it's a sense of purpose.

President Caceres discussed that for immigrants who were sent here by their family for educational purposes, the pressure is even greater:

When you come here, we were no exception, where your family has to take out loans to support you. Even if the university gives you a scholarship, it's not going to cover it. So, when an immigrant comes here, especially in an academic field, you know that a lot is riding on you, that a lot of people are counting on you.

President Caceres reiterated that this familial pressure is what bolsters an immigrant's resiliency.

President Foda joked that she feels like one of those bobo dolls: "You get hit and you keep bouncing back and that is just from the messaging of you've got to be better. No matter what. Even when you're knocked down... just brush it off and keep going and keep improving."

For President Foda, this idea of bouncing back from adversity is one that is discussed by many of the presidents. Because there is a sense of having to work harder than non-immigrants, many of the presidents felt this also contributed to the resiliency they demonstrated in their personal and professional life. President Franco concurred with President Foda and remarked:

We do have to work three times harder and so it makes you tougher. And, because we have to work harder, we learn so much more. So, our breadth of experience is so much



better. And our resume, our resilience, our insights, etc. And our learnings are so much deeper and I have a thick skin, so I would say those are things I struggled with. But as I get older, I'm getting better at it. I don't know what my next step will be. I am keeping my eyes open for all kinds of opportunities and they are coming and I am not afraid.

For President Franco, this powerful statement of struggle, resilience and not being afraid is one that was shared by many of the presidents and significant perspective they share with their students and those whom they lead.

**Everything is everything—Legacy.** The final subtheme emerged out of the first semi-structured interview I conducted when I asked the very first participant what they would want to be remembered for or want their legacy to be. The question generated such thoughtful, eloquent, and idealistic responses that the researcher used the responses as the last question to close out the interview. Below is a summary of the participants' response.

President Foda laughed and said what she wants to be remembered for and what she will actually be remembered for might be two different things:

I'd like to think they'll remember me for the work on driving equity, social and economic equity for underserved students...but, it'll probably be for saving the institution and making sure it continued to exist for another day.

President Grande shared that he would like to be remembered “for being somebody who treated people with dignity and respect.” President Zongo stated that he wants to be missed and “to leave when the time is right and make things better than I found it. The last one always matters to me. When I’ve made a place better than I found it, then I know my time is up to go.”

When President Nyobe was asked this question, he smiled and shared:

I don't often think about what my legacy will be, but what I often think about is how am I impacting people in a positive way. Because each and every person is born for a reason. And so, your role is to help people. That's part of our culture. I would say my legacy will speak for itself and is I believe that I live in moments. How I change people's lives and that collectively will be my legacy in the future.

For President Nyobe, he shared that his culture emphasized leading with your purpose and the importance of treating people well. President Franco sat quietly for a moment and said:

I want to be remembered as someone who really transformed the communities, transformed individual lives, and someone who empowered people. Someone who helped people imagine something that is way bigger than what they could have ever hoped to be. I just want to leave the world a better place. And because we are in education, I get an opportunity to multiply that exponentially because we're educating people who are going to make the world a better place. I have a very strong sense of what kind of world I want to live in. It's one that is more socially, environmentally, racially, and economically just and equitable. And, that's why I want to be known as someone who works for those ideals and helped to shape how we can magnify the impact... more than me as a single person could do.

President Franco's elegant response reiterated many of the powerful points the other fourteen presidents had previously discussed. While the presidents shared different immigration journeys, different countries of origin, and different cultural backgrounds, the findings indicated that there were common threads woven throughout their experiences. Many of the presidents shared the same spirit of compassion, resiliency, service, ethics, discipline, and honor. They also consistently looked for opportunities to contribute to the greater good and to treat others with

dignity and respect. The presidents were proud of what they have been able to accomplish as well as looked forward to leaving a meaningful and impactful legacy.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of 15 foreign-born college and university presidents who lead academic institutions in the United States. The participants, both current and former college and university presidents, all self-identified as immigrants and people of Color. In addition, all of the presidents were appointed to their position within the last ten years. The participants provided rich, thick descriptions of their experiences as foreign-born college and university presidents within the framework of asset-based community development and how they have demonstrated in the context of their role as a college or university president.

The themes that emerged from the research provide an in-depth description of their experiences within academia as well as how they maneuver through society as an immigrant. The emerged themes are a combination of in vivo codes which are direct quotes from the participants as well as a result of the researcher utilizing a coding process called “themeing the data” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 200). Themeing the data was employed to create themes that mirrored the language generated by the participants. Research question one was answered through the development of two themes that emerged during the course of the interview. The first theme addressed the experiences of immigrants considering coming to the United States and what was occurring in their world when they decided to immigrate to the United States. The theme also discussed what migration policy experts call *push and pull factors*—reasons why the participants initially left their country (Parkins, 2010). As the findings indicate, some left to pursue higher education and increased economic opportunities, others left to escape political or religious

persecution, others left to pursue the idealistic freedoms they were not afforded in their own country, the opportunity for economic stability and an improved quality of life, while still others left as adolescents to join their families. While it is true that some of the participants were thrilled to be immigrating to the United States and looked forward to the many opportunities afforded to them on this journey, it would be an incomplete narrative to say that all of the participants were excited initially to be leaving their home country...the only place they have ever known. Although some of the participants had been accepted to graduate school and looked forward to their academic journey, some shared that they were still torn at the prospect of leaving parents, family members, friends and colleagues. Therefore, this theme also discussed the emotional, psychological, physical and cultural challenges they encountered as they left their country and the families who supported them.

The second theme discussed their experiences of living simultaneously in two distinct worlds. As described by the participants, these worlds were their country of origin, and how they balance that with their life here in the United States, as well as the world of higher education and the challenges they face as they negotiate between these spaces with an anti-immigration environment. The subtheme *To Whom Do You Belong?* addressed the loneliness they encountered and the lack of a sense of belonging they sometimes felt. Many of the presidents recognized that this longing for connection allowed them to be sensitive to the needs of international students as well as other underrepresented and marginalized groups on their campus.

Research question two focused on the strategies and approaches foreign-born presidents employ on their path to the presidency. The themes that emerged was the experience of the pathway these presidents took, their leadership style and how their culture influenced their

leadership. The participants also discussed the challenges they encountered on their pathway to the presidency such as not being taken seriously to being challenged opening by subordinates as well as major crises management issues they inherited. Theme three and the subsequent subthemes addressed issues pertaining to racial, ethnic, and accent discrimination as well as microaggressions and stereotyping the presidents encountered. The presidents challenged the dominant culture to look past their accents and to recognize that not only can they learn from individuals with accents, but that accents represent multilingualism—a highly sought-after skill across the world. In addition, the presidents discussed challenging the monolithic narrative of “the immigrant” which has been perpetuated by the local media. Rather, they implored the dominant culture to be open to the diverse, authentic, and equally valid discourse on the multiplicity of the immigrant experience. The participants shared they have had to work harder than their peers and colleagues from the dominant culture. They also felt they were excluded from social and professional/formal and informal networks in higher education and deprived of the opportunity to build and cultivate social capital.

Research question three addressed how resiliency manifested itself in the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents. Through the theme, *If I Ruled the World*, the presidents shared their dreams, goals and aspirations for their institution as well as their contribution to the academy in general. The presidents discussed the assets they bring to higher education such as the international partnerships, local global trade connections, innovative programming, and creative fundraising. Further, the presidents discussed the ways in which they demonstrate resiliency in the context of their role as the president such as working harder, being recognized internationally for their research achievements, and intentionally mentoring the next generation of higher education leaders. Finally, the presidents discussed what they would like to

accomplish during their tenure and most importantly what they would like their legacy to be and how they would like to be remembered.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

The focus of this phenomenological study was to research the lived experiences of 15 foreign-born college and university presidents of institutions based in the United States. By examining the lived experiences of the participants, the researcher attempted to understand how their cultural background influenced their leadership and prepared them to lead academic institutions in the United States. In addition, the research sought to have a deeper understanding of the challenges the presidents experienced on their pathway, strategies for overcoming the challenges and how they demonstrated resiliency in the context of their role as a college or university president. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of foreign-born college or university presidents in the journey to the college presidency and how do the foreign-born presidents perceive the influence of their cultural background on their journey to the presidency?
2. What strategies and approaches can be identified from the experiences of foreign-born university presidents in navigating the presidential pipeline and advancing to the presidency?
3. How does resiliency manifest itself in the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents?

The research was grounded in an asset-based community development framework as well as a theoretical approach on immigrant resilience. Rooted in the social justice movements of the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, asset-based community development explores how traditionally marginalized populations contribute to their larger community (Haines, 2009; Hilburn, 2015). The intent of asset-based community development framework is to remove the deficit language that is traditionally attributed to marginalized communities, in this context, communities of Color

and immigrant communities and to shift the negative rhetoric into a positive discourse (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). For example, instead of focusing on the needs, deficits, and insufficiencies of a community, rather the gaze is shifted to distinguish the positive attributes and contributions the community is in possession of (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). For foreign-born/immigrant presidents, this process entails recognizing they are producers of knowledge, culture, social capital and creators of “synergistic co-learning opportunities” (Hilburn, 2015, p. 373). By adhering to the grounding principle of asset-based community development, such as recognizing the “capacities of its individuals, associations, and institution” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996, p. 25) and the value they have and we can understand and embrace the full spectrum of assets they contribute to their surrounding community as well as their campus community. By utilizing an asset based theoretical approach, my research contextualized the contributions of immigrant college and university presidents.

In addition to an asset-based community development framework, a theoretical approach on immigrant resiliency grounded the research. This theoretical approach provided a deeper and richer context in which to understand the lived experiences of the presidents, how they negotiated their journey to the United States, how they negotiated their pathway to the presidency, and how they currently negotiate their world as institutional leaders. Through these experiences we witness how foreign-born college and university presidents demonstrate resiliency in the various facets of their lives.

The increase in international migration patterns has provided an impetus to research the resiliency of immigrants (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010; Rashid & Gregory, 2014). Further it is important to identify what contributes to their ability to demonstrate resiliency and remain resilient in the face of sustained and prolonged challenges they may encounter (Anderson, 1987;



Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017; Rashid & Gregory, 2014). In fact, much of the extant research supports the premise that for immigrants who encounter biases, microaggressions, stereotypes, and discrimination, “positive ethnic and cultural identity was related to higher levels of self-esteem which weakened the negative effects of discrimination” (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010, p. 1) and other adverse encounters (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010). In Singh, Hays, Chung, and Watson’s (2010) research on South Asian immigrant women, the participants found that their social location as immigrants allowed them to pull on aspects of their culture and cultural background for healing. Further, the research indicated that due to drawing on elements of their ethnic identity, their sense of purpose, and sense of hope, these individuals demonstrated greater instances of resiliency and moved from simply surviving to thriving (Watson, 2010).

The existing literature on the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents is limited. However, scholars indicate that within the last decade, not only are academic institutions graduating more immigrants, but these individuals are now aspiring to higher education leadership positions such as campus chancellor and university president (Hussar & Bailey, 2016; Skinner, 2018a, 2018b) Skinner also notes that for members of the Association of American Universities (AAU), an organization created in the 1900s for high achieving, high research doctoral granting institutions, 23 percent of the institutional leaders in 2017 were foreign-born (American Association of Universities, n.d.). As more presidents are expected to retire, Skinner predicts that an increasing number of foreign-born individuals will continue to aspire to those positions thereby globalizing the office of the president (Skinner, 2018a, 2018b).

In fact, there are now more foreign-born college and university presidents in office than at any other time in the history of higher education (Marklein, 2016; Skinner, 2018b). Foderaro

(2011), Marklein (2016), and Skinner (2018b) note this is a result of the increase in international students who tend to directly feed into the presidential pipeline. As Marklein (2016) notes, “with few exceptions, foreign-born presidents rose through the ranks of U.S. higher education” (p. 300). While foreign-born college and university presidents have many different experiences, their immigration journey, pathway to the presidency, and the act of negotiating their role and space in academia is a unique phenomenon they share. As a result of their immigration to the United States and various academic achievements, foreign-born college and university presidents demonstrate an aspect of resiliency that is informed by their ethnic identities and cultural backgrounds and distinguishes them from their respective peers from the dominant culture. This identity also informs how they lead, the assets they bring to their community, and the legacy they wish to be remembered for.

The lack of research on the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents, their pathways to the presidency, and the contributions they make to their campus and local community are missed opportunities. Extensive research has been conducted on men of Color presidents (e.g., Castro, 2018; Robinson, 2018; Rodriguez, 2005) and women of Color presidents (e.g., Holmes, 2004; Jackson & Harris, 2007; Oikelome, 2017; Roy, 2019; Viernes-Turner, 2007). There is much less research on the experiences of out gay and lesbian presidents and even less research has been conducted on the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents (e.g., Bullard, 2013; Englert, 2018; Leipold, 2014). While Hanson’s (2012) study on foreign-born women in leadership positions in higher education provided thick description and deep insight such as the “acceptance of duality as a way of life” (p. 1) and how immigrant administrators are “using foreignness as an advantage” (p.1), the small sample size (one participant), was acknowledged as a limitation to the study as well as the vague description

of the leadership position the participant had been appointed to in their respective academic institution. Conversely, Lee's (2018) study on the experiences of South East Asian women in leadership at California community colleges was more in-depth with ten participants. However, only one participant was a college/university president while the other nine participants held leadership responsibilities outside the scope of the president or chancellor's office.

At the time of this study, there has been little if any research on the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States representing diverse continents, countries, racial and ethnic diversity, academic disciplines, and educational institutions. In addition, there has been little to any research on the assets foreign-born college and university presidents bring to their campus and surrounding community or how they demonstrate resiliency in the context of their role as an administrator. Due to the intent of this study—to secure rich and thick description as well as to explore the lived experiences of the presidents—phenomenology was identified as the most appropriate research approach.

Phenomenology, as described by Ravitch and Carl (2016), “focuses on the experience of the participant(s) in an examination of shared experience” (p. 224). By utilizing a phenomenological approach, I gained a deeper and richer understanding of the shared experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents, how their cultural traditions and backgrounds influenced their leadership and prepared them to lead, their diverse pathways to the presidency, the assets they contribute to the campus as well as the surrounding community, and how they demonstrate resiliency in the context of their role as the president. By interviewing the participants as well as reviewing documents such as their curriculum vitas and institutional press releases, the following themes emerged: (1) Coming to America; (2) Living in Two Worlds; (3) Ready or Not, Here I Come; (4) Go Back to Your Country; and, (5) If I Ruled the World. The

five themes that emerged out of the data will be discussed in detail below and will be situated within the existing literature. Additionally, implications for future research will be addressed as well as a conclusion of the research will be provided.

### **Coming to America**

The participants, foreign-born college and university presidents, described the plethora of reasons they came to the United States, however, 12 of the 15 presidents indicated that they immigrated to the United States to pursue their graduate degree(s). While in the United States, the 12 participants matriculated from graduate school and or pursued their doctoral degree and stayed in academia, pursuing the traditional route such as dean and chief academic officer. Approximately 60 percent of the presidents interviewed for my study self-identified as Asian and 40 percent of those individuals indicated that they came from India. In addition to pursuing graduate education, the findings of the study indicate that more than 60 percent of the participants also immigrated to the United States for non-educational reasons. For example, political oppression, economic instability, civil war, escaping arranged marriages, or being brought over as an adolescent were provided as additional reasons for immigrating to the United States.

While more than 50 percent of the participants felt the wars, oppression, and instability were out of their control, their attitudes, how they looked at these events, and what they did with their opportunity once they immigrated to the United States was discussed as an aspect they could control. Many of the participants believed this positive and resilient perspective had guided their personal and professional pathways. However, in recalling their reasons for immigrating to the United States, half of the participants also discussed the influence of a loved one or parent encouraging their journey. Of equal importance, approximately half of the participants also

discussed the emotional burden they felt from leaving their family and friends and sacrifices such as having to secure personal loans, postponing wedding engagements, and the delaying of specific cultural celebrations in order for them to immigrate to the United States.

Scholars acknowledge that since 1965 when revisions were made to U.S. immigration laws, the United States has seen a steady incline in the immigrant population (Bausum, 2014; Kennedy, 1964; Skinner, 2018a). Skinner (2018b) further notes that while many industries such as technology and business have benefitted from immigrants, academic institutions currently house the largest numbers of immigrants when compared to other industries. And, scholars have recognized that academic institutions have also benefitted significantly from the contributions made by international students, foreign-born faculty, and foreign-born administrators (Bausum, 2014; Skinner, 2018b).

### **Living in Two Worlds**

The findings from my research resulted in the theme referenced above and includes two subthemes: (a) Straddling Multiple Identities and (b) To Whom Do You Belong. These themes emerged as the presidents discussed challenges they encountered pertaining to how they self-identify as individuals as compared to how their identities are codified for them such as woman, woman of Color, immigrant, African American, new comer, etc. In addition, the presidents shared the complexity of living in the United States, but still having deep relationships and connections to their home country. The presidents also shared the difficulty of living in the United States for over 20 years, yet still being viewed as other, outsider, or different while simultaneously having to contend with feelings of loneliness and disconnectedness. For example, all of the presidents shared that although they had lived in the United States for many decades, they still had difficulty fitting in. However, there were positive attributes they recognized. For

example, several of the presidents acknowledged that it is due to their foreign identity that they have been able to build strong connections and meaningful relationships with international students as well as students of Color who often experience similar feelings of disconnectedness to the institutions they attend.

The findings from my research suggest that straddling multiple identities as well as the idea of dualism or living in different worlds is not limited to foreign-born women; foreign-born men also encounter these experiences. For example, in addition to being pressured to pick an identity, e.g., man of Color or immigrant man, several of the participants acknowledged being ethnically or racially misidentified. This includes being misidentified from a completely different ethnic group such as individuals from Asian countries were incorrectly identified as Latinos, individuals from the Indian subcontinent were misidentified as immigrating from a completely different Asian country, and individuals from African countries were misidentified as African Americans.

Further, this study of foreign-born presidents suggests an additional challenge the participants encountered was due to the increased diversification and internationalization efforts on their respective campus. The presidents felt increasing pressure to support and at times mentor large numbers of faculty, staff and students who identify as immigrants, people of Colors, and international while still leading faculty, staff, and students from the dominant culture. Furthermore, some of the presidents shared that as an immigrant, they were also consistently identified as a spokesperson for all immigration discussions regardless of their political affiliation and or if they personally support immigration or not. Finally, the findings indicate that regardless of their personal and political affiliations, the participants needed to be president to everyone even when they disagreed with the individuals they were hired to lead.

The lack of extensive research available on foreign-born college and university presidents required that the extant literature available on presidents of Color as well as foreign-born faculty be used to support some of the findings from this research. Collins (2008) acknowledges that foreign-born faculty encounter unique challenges that other faculty populations may not such as dealing with the loneliness and isolation of being in a foreign country. Since approximately 90% of the participants in the study began their careers as foreign-born faculty, the extant literature on presidents of Color and foreign-born faculty appropriately situated and supported some of the research findings. For example, Viernes-Turner (2007) highlights that women of Color consistently have to learn “how to function in two distinct sociocultural environments, either by drawing on their identity and upholding institutional values (dualism) or by drawing on their identity and working toward the social transformation of their institution (negotiation)” (p. 5).

### **Ready or Not, Here I Come**

This theme refers to the sometimes serendipitous, unplanned, and unanticipated pathway the presidents took on their journey to this leadership position. In addition to the theme, there are four subthemes that emerged: (a) Leading with Grace; (b) Leading with Culture; (c) A Bumpy Ride; (d) They Saw Me like Olivia Pope.

Out of the 15 participants, only one indicated that they were actively seeking a presidential position. For most of the participants, they held positions as faculty and ascended the traditional leadership ladder making their way of the ranks to chair, dean, provost/chief academic officer up to the president’s office. Four of the 15 participants had non-traditional and non-academic routes to the presidency. This study supports the extant literature on community college leadership which posits that community college leadership tends to represent more diversity, but the leadership also represents diverse experiences outside of traditional faculty,

provost, and chief academic officer appointments (Duree, 2007). In addition, one president from my study came from the private sector and one president came up the ranks through student affairs. However, this research found that foreign-born women do not always pursue the traditional academic routes and ascend to the office of the president through auxiliary offices on campus as well. It is interesting to note that most of the foreign-born college and university presidents indicated that, while they never aspired to be a leader at an academic institution, they have fully embraced their role and feel as though they can truly impact change on their campus. While impacting change on campus was important to the participants, the lack of representation gave them pause. Ten out of the 15 presidents shared that due to the lack of ethnic and racial representation in the office of the president as well as a lack of diversity in the president's cabinet and other leadership positions on their campuses, this somewhat dissuaded them from initially pursuing leadership positions on campus. However, due to the passion and dedication they exhibited, 14 of the 15 participants confirmed that they were not seeking a presidential appointment but rather that they were identified by peers, colleagues, or administrators at their institution and were encouraged to pursue leadership positions.

The subthemes of Leading with Grace and Leading with Culture spoke to the need of finding one's distinct leadership style and how that style is directly influenced by the presidents' culture. For example, several of the presidents shared that their current leadership style can be attributed to their cultural upbringing. The findings in this research also demonstrate how important individual and institutional match are to a successful presidency. Several of the presidents shared that they have been successful not only due to the assets they bring, but in identifying a good institutional fit. Similarly, for participants who were former presidents the importance of institutional fit was echoed and challenges they encountered were discussed.



An additional finding encountered by all 15 of the participants was the fact that they were all hired to fix, clean up, or address an issue or several issues on their campus. Some of the issues the individuals were hired to address were not disclosed during the on-campus interviews nor during their contract negotiations. This led to the subtheme They Saw Me like Olivia Pope' named after the crises management professional who stars in the television show Scandal. Olivia Pope, the protagonist, is hired to mitigate crises management and any issues her clients encounter. This finding, which surprised me, indicated that all 15 of the foreign-born presidents replaced a White predecessor. These individuals were 12 White males and 3 White females. It is important to note that while the predecessors may not have created or caused all of these issues (e.g., financial mismanagement, accreditation issues, instances of racial discrimination, and sexual assault, etc.), all of the foreign-born presidents were hired to fix or mitigate these issues. The participants shared they were hired to address these issues due to their innovation, creativity, resiliency, or the fact that their hiring institutions were seeking novel approaches to crises management and they felt the foreign-born presidents could provide a unique perspective. This finding seems to go against the grain, as a great deal of the literature seems to indicate that during times of crises, institutions tend to be more conservative in their hiring practices and would rather court White males in their 60s as a safe, strategic bet, not recognizing that foreign-born presidents tend to be more innovative and strategic in their approach (Crandall, Espinosa, Gangone, & Huges, 2017).

### **Go Back to Your Country!**

This theme and the following subthemes, (a) Lost in Translation and (b) Working Hard for the Money, emerged as a result of the difficult discussion the presidents shared in sometimes being a foreigner in the United States. While not all of the participants had this exact term

directed at them, many of them heard some variation of this phraseology. This study established new findings in regards to the discrimination of foreign-born women presidents. Building on the work of Castro (2018) and Rodriguez (2005) who researched men of Color experiencing discrimination. My research findings indicate that this was not limited to men. Both males and females in this study discussed having to be more experienced, more educated, and more talented than their colleagues, just to be considered for most positions. For example, my research findings indicate that all 15 of the presidents have doctoral degrees. This is in contrast to some White males who are college and university presidents yet do not have a doctoral degree. In addition, all of the presidents speak more than one language. Further, 14 out of the 15 presidents speak three or four languages. What is especially impressive is that while three of the 15 participants were brought over to the United States as adolescents, the remaining twelve all immigrated in their 20s or older and attended undergraduate and or graduate school in the United States. Furthermore, they enrolled in college classes where English was spoken, and they excelled although English was not their primary language. An additional finding from the research indicates that for many of the presidents they encounter some form of accent discrimination. This discrimination is even evident for the presidents who have a British accent as a result of their country's colonization by the United Kingdom.

Viernes-Turner (2007) found that for women of Color presidents, they have to consistently dispel incorrect and inaccurate stereotypes and prejudices in regard to culture, accent, and even immigration status. The men of Color presidents from previous research conducted experienced similar microaggressions, minus the sexualized or gendered microaggressions that women of Color experience. Still, Castro (2018) and Rodriguez (2005) found that men of Color who had immigrant backgrounds also experienced racial and ethnic

discrimination based on their appearance and accent discrimination based on whether or not they spoke a language other than English.

Interestingly, Albert's (2008) study of immigrant women faculty found that the differential treatment the faculty received from students, colleagues, and administrators was dependent on the listeners' class membership, experiences with individuals from different countries and cultures, and the listeners' educational level. Albert found that individuals whom identify within a lower socio-economic status had more difficulty understanding immigrant women faculty than middle or upper-middle class individuals whom tend to have more multicultural and international experiences. Similar to the findings from Albert's research, much of the harassment these presidents encountered was generated from individuals who identify with a lower socio-economic status with limited international experiences who lacked racial and ethnic diversity in their interpersonal relationships. However, it was not limited to these individuals. Other presidents shared that at time the harassment originated with their own peers, colleagues, students, or stakeholders in the community.

In addition to the racial and ethnic discrimination they encounter, foreign-born presidents, also feel like they have to work harder than their peers in order to compete for the same position. An additional finding from the research indicates that although all of the participants have been in the United States between 20 and 50 years, the statement of "go back to your country" was especially jarring for them since many of the presidents shared that they had been in the United States longer than they had been in their own country of origin. Further, the findings of this research indicate that all of the presidents indicated that immigrants in general are hardworking and desire the same opportunities for themselves and their families. Castro

(2018) and Rodriguez (2005) both indicate in their research that men of Color feel as though they have to work twice as hard for less pay and little recognition.

Manrique and Manrique (1999) shared that foreign-born faculty may also encounter challenges of being viewed as a diversity hire to fill an affirmative action quota, they may experience the awkwardness of having to prove themselves not only in their respective academic field but also amongst their White colleagues, and the challenges they face in attempting to fit in their host country while holding on to their ethnic and cultural identity. Oftentimes, foreign-born faculty feel discriminated against, unappreciated, underpaid, and sometimes not viewed as a valuable university resource, yet are always being asked to volunteer for diversity and campus internationalization committees and mentor more international students and students of Color over and above what their White peers have to contend with (Manrique & Manrique, 1999).

Foreign-born women presidents encountered gendered microaggressions that their male peers did not encounter. This gendered microaggression is not exclusive to foreign-born women presidents as women of Color presidents have encountered this as well. Roy's (2019) research on Asian American women indicate that these women are challenged specifically for being deemed weak. Roy counters that this behavior "demeans their intelligence and capabilities as leaders" (p. 108).

### **If I Ruled the World**

The final theme and the subthemes, (a) Giving You the Best that I Got, (b) Sense of Purpose, and (c) Everything is Everything, emerged as a result of asking the presidents what they would like to accomplish during their tenure, what assets they feel they bring to their campus and community, how they demonstrate resiliency, and what they would like to be remembered for. Guided by an asset-based theoretical framework, my research challenged the dominant discourse

on immigrants by examining the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents and the ways in which they negotiate their space in the office of the president, negotiate their identities, and are leading change on their campus as well as demonstrating resiliency. In this context, asset-based community development was used to determine the assets foreign-born college and university presidents have and contribute to their campus as well as their surrounding community. For example, this research found that all 15 of the presidents demonstrate a plethora of gifts, skills, and talents such as speaking several languages, constantly identifying opportunities to leverage their domestic and international connections and supporting strong community partnerships.

Further, due to the expectations of family members they left in their home country, personal loans they had to take out, and other familial obligations, the presidents in this study felt a tremendous amount of responsibility to not only be successful once they immigrated to the United States but also to assist the next generation of foreign-born leaders. Finally, the research findings indicate the foreign-born presidents demonstrate tremendous resiliency. This is exemplified in their academic achievements, professional accomplishments, the assets they bring and cultivate for their communities, and the legacies they wish to leave. These findings have implications for policy, practice and future research.

Kretzmann and McKnight's (1996) research on asset-based community development is predicated on the principles of removing deficit and needs-based rhetoric and instead changing the narrative to one that encompasses positive, affirming language. Specifically, Kretzmann and McKnight posit that when affirming language is used with traditionally marginalized communities versus a needs-based framework, communities of Color and immigrant

communities not only have better outcomes, but are also more inclined to identify with the positive attributes (gifts, skills, talents) and to believe they embody these positive attributes.

The extant literature also indicates that additional assets foreign-born college and university presidents contribute to their campus and their surrounding community include the ability to serve as role models for the increasingly diverse and minoritized student population, both U.S.-born and international students (Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011; Manrique & Manrique, 1999; Omiteru et al., 2018; Theobald, 2007); the ability to represent an image of a multicultural society (Foote, Li, Monk, & Theobald, 2008; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010; Manrique & Manrique, 1999); the ability to leverage their international contacts abroad to enhance the learning and research experiences of their campus (Manrique & Manrique, 1999; Marvasti, 2005); as well as being recognized internationally for prestigious research awards (Anderson, 2017). In addition, with the unique talent and diversified experiences immigrant college and university presidents bring, there are opportunities to fill leadership pipelines which can significantly influence the demographics of their institutions (Azziz, 2014).

### **Policies and Practices for Higher Education Implementation**

Information gleaned from these in-depth, descriptive, and authentic interviews will be used to share with aspiring foreign-born college and university presidents as a way to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities they may encounter. In addition, this research can better inform and prepare executive search committees and board of trustees of the importance of including diverse committee members from academia, the non-profit sector, and the business and technology fields which traditionally have been more open to the global diversity of their respective fields; this measure could result in more diverse candidates applying and being selected for presidential positions.

Further, this research is also valuable for professional leadership development initiatives such as the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows program. The ACE Fellows program may consider including a track specifically created for foreign-born college and university presidents designed to outline opportunities and challenges aspiring presidents may encounter and ways to mitigate them; however, in addition, the track could be used as an opportunity for camaraderie and support for one another. In addition, this research can be used by organizations such as the Council of Independent Colleges who would benefit from providing professional development opportunities to current and aspiring foreign-born college presidents. Finally, the foreign-born college and university presidents who participated in this research may want to create an alliance for themselves and other foreign-born presidents—such as LGBTQ Presidents in Higher Education— as a way of developing camaraderie, but also as a means of cultivating valuable networks, building social capital, and fostering formal and informal mentoring opportunities.

### **Future Research**

The intent of this research was to explore the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents in the United States. The focus of the research was designed specifically for immigrant presidents who self-identify as People of Color (POC) who have been in office for 10 years or less. In the future, additional research can explore more broadly all foreign-born college and university presidents, even those individuals who do not identify as a POC to see if the experiences are transferrable. Future research can explore if immigrant presidents who have been in office more than 10 years have similar experiences, or future research may choose to dig deeper and explore exclusively the experiences of one particular ethnicity such as individuals who emigrated from the Indian subcontinent.

I chose to include asset-based community development framework, however, there may be other development frameworks that can be considered. The majority of my participants were appointed to public, 4-year degree granting institutions, presidents at community colleges, and a few private, not-for-profit institutions. Additional research could explore immigrant presidents at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Minority Serving Institutions (MSI), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), or Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) to determine if the experiences for immigrant presidents are different and or more rewarding when they are surrounded by other minoritized populations. Further, future researchers may consider including academic institutions with high numbers of immigrant/international students and employees to determine if their experiences would be comparable to the findings in this research.

### **Conclusion**

By exploring the lived experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents, it was my intention to demonstrate in rich detail the many contributions immigrant presidents have made as well as the challenges they have encountered. While anti-immigration sentiment increases daily, United States citizens must remember that ethnocentrism and “they” vs “us” discourse places the United States in a dangerous trajectory of repeating the past. As a country replete with beautiful diversity, United States citizens must recognize that U.S. diversity makes the nation stronger and richer, and the participants in this study gives us a glimpse of this recognition.



## References

- Abdul-Alim, J. (2017 May 30). *LGBTQ college presidents: Work not over for those who are 'out'*. Retrieved from <http://www.lgbtqpresidents.org/>
- Abla, Z. (2012), *Portraits of Successful African immigrant faculty on U.S campuses* (Doctoral dissertation). Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH.
- Anderson, J. M. (1987). Migration and health: Perspectives on immigrant women. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 9(4), 410-438.
- Aroian, K. J., & Norris, A. E. (2000). Resilience, stress, and depression among Russian immigrants to Israel. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22(1), 54-67.
- Anderson, S. (October 8, 2017). Immigrants keep winning Nobel prizes. *Forbes Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2017/10/08/immigrants-keep-winning-nobel-prizes/#250c971c117b>
- American Bazaar Wire (2013 March 22). A flood of Indian-born leaders at US universities. *American Bazaar*. Retrieved from <https://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2013/03/22/a-flood-of-indian-born-leaders-at-us-universities/>
- American Council on Education (2018). *Fellows program*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/leadership/programs/Pages/ACE-Fellows-Program.aspx>
- American Council on Education. (2017). *The American college president survey*. Washington, DC: Author.
- American Council on Education. (2016). *The American college president survey 2016*. Washington, DC: Author.

- Amey, M. J., VanDerLinden, K. E., & Brown, D. F. (2002). Perspectives on community college leadership: Twenty years in the making. *Community College Journal of Leadership and Practice*, 26(7-8), 573-589.
- Aroian, K. J., & Norris, A. E. (2000). Resilience, stress, and depression among Russian immigrants to Israel. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22(1), 54-67.
- Association of American Universities. (2019). *Who we are: Our members*. Retrieved from <https://www.aau.edu/who-we-are/our-members>
- Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities. (2019). *Changing Demographics*. Retrieved from <https://agb.org/trusteeship-article/changing-demographics>
- Azziz, R. (2014 April 24). Back to the future: Why is the diversity of university leadership stuck in the '80s? *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-ricardo-azziz/back-to-the-future-college-presidents\\_b\\_5200573.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-ricardo-azziz/back-to-the-future-college-presidents_b_5200573.html)
- Bausum, A. (2014). *Denied, detained, deported: Stories from the dark side of American immigration*. Washington, DC: National Geographic.
- Blumenstyk, G. (2014). *American higher education in crisis?: What everyone needs to know*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Bullard, E. A. (2013). *Queer leadership: A phenomenological study of the experiences of out gay and lesbian higher education presidents* (Doctoral dissertation). Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO. Retrieved from [https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/78809/Bullard\\_colostate\\_0053A\\_11722.pdf?sequence=1](https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/78809/Bullard_colostate_0053A_11722.pdf?sequence=1)

- Cardoso, J. B., & Thompson, S. (2010). Common themes of resilience among Latino immigrant families: A systematic review of the literature. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 91(3), 257-265.
- Castro, I. M. J. (2018). *Obstacles and successes of male university presidents of color: A qualitative study of leaders at public universities*. (Master Thesis). California State University, Fresno, CA. Retrieved from [https://repository.library.fresnostate.edu/bitstream/handle/10211.3/203024/Castro\\_csu\\_6050N\\_10547.pdf?sequence=1](https://repository.library.fresnostate.edu/bitstream/handle/10211.3/203024/Castro_csu_6050N_10547.pdf?sequence=1)
- Chitnis, D. (2014, July 17). The Top 10 Indian American educators in US universities. *American Bazaar*. Retrieved from. <https://www.americanbazaaronline.com/2014/07/17/top-10-indian-american-educators-us-universities/>
- Choudhry, U. (2001). Uprooting and resettlement experiences of South Asian immigrant women. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 23(4), 376-393.
- Cicchetti, D., & Garmezy, N. (1993). Prospects and promises in the study of resilience. *Development and Psychopathology*, 5(4), 497-502.
- Cook, B., & Kim, Y. (2012). *The American college president*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Crandall, J. R., Espinosa, L. L., Gangone, L.M., Hughes, S. L. (2017). *Looking back and looking forward: A review of the ACE fellows program*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

- deLeon, M. J., & Brunner, C. C. (2013). Cycles of fear: A model of lesbian and gay educational leaders' lived experiences. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 49(1), 161-203.
- Duree, C. A. (2007). *The challenges of the community college presidency in the new millennium: Pathways, preparation, competencies, and leadership programs needed to survive* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Iowa State University, Ames, IA.
- Englert, P. (2018). *Experiences explored through the prism: Out gay and lesbian pathways to university presidency* (Doctoral dissertation). Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY.
- Ewing, K. P. (2005). Immigrant identities and emotion. In C. Casey & R. B. Edgerton (Eds.), *A companion to psychological anthropology: Modernity and psychocultural change* (pp. 225–240). Oxford, UK: Blackwell. doi:10.1002/9780470996409.ch13
- Fain, P. (2010, November 29). Diversity remains fleeting on colleges' governing boards, surveys find. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Diversity-Remains-Fleeting-on/125566>
- Foderaro, L.W. (2011, March 9). More foreign-born scholars lead U.S. universities. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/education/10presidents.html>
- Foote, K. E., Li, W., Monk, J., & Theobald, R. (2008). Foreign-born scholars in US universities: Issues, concerns, and strategies. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32(2), 167-178.
- Gagliardi, J. S., Espinosa, L. L., Turk, J. M., & Taylor, M. (2017). *The American college president study: Key findings and takeaways*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

- Gahungu, A. (2011). Integration of foreign-born faculty in academia: Foreignness as an asset. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 6(1), 1-22.
- Greene, R. R., Galambos, C., & Lee, Y. (2004). Resilience theory: Theoretical and professional conceptualizations. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 8(4), 75-91.
- Goodman, R. D., Vesely, C. K., Letiecq, B., & Cleaveland, C. L. (2017). Trauma and resilience among refugee and undocumented immigrant women. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, (95), 309-321.
- Gomez, A. (2019 May 30). Here are the 10 key immigration issues presidential candidates face in the campaign trail. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2019/05/30/key-immigration-issues-2020-campaign/3752312002/>
- Haines, A. (2009). Asset-based community development. *An introduction to community development*, 38-48.
- Hanson, H. (2012). *A qualitative study of a story of a foreign-born woman serving in a leadership position in higher education in the United States using narrative inquiry* (Doctoral dissertation). George Fox University, Newberg, OR.
- Harper, S. R. (2010). An anti-deficit achievement framework for research on students of color in STEM. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2010(148), 63-74.
- Hartley, H. V., III, & Godin, E. E. (2009). *A study of career patterns of the presidents of independent colleges and universities*. Washington, DC: Council of Independent Colleges.

- Hattar-Pollara, M., & Meleis, A. I. (1995). The stress of immigration and the daily lived experiences of Jordanian immigrant women in the United States. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 17*(5), 521-539.
- Harvard University. (n.d.). *Henry Dunster*. Retrieved from <https://www.harvard.edu/about-harvard/harvard-glance/history-presidency/henry-dunster>
- Hilburn, J. (2015). Asset-based Civics for, with, and by immigrant students: Three sites of enriched teaching and learning for immigrant and native-born students. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 43*(3), 372-404.
- History: The Belmont Report -- Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. (n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/regulations/45-cfr-46/index.html>
- Holmes, S. L. (2004). Introduction: An overview of African American college presidents: A game of two steps forward, one step backward, and standing still. *Journal of Negro Education, 73*(1), 21-21. doi:10.2307/3211257
- Hussar, W. J., & Bailey, T. M. (2016). *Projections of education statistics to 2024* (NCES 2016-013). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016013.pdf>
- Inside Higher Ed & Gallup. (2018). *2018 Survey of college and university presidents*. Washington, DC: Inside Higher Ed.
- Jackson, J., & Cochran, M. (2003). Black versus black: The relationships among African, African American, and African Caribbean persons. *Journal of Black Studies, 33*(3), 576-604.

- Jackson, S., & Harris, S. (2007). African American female college and university presidents: Experiences and perceptions of barriers to the presidency. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 5(2), 119-137.
- Jaschik, S., & Lederman, D. (2019). *2019 Survey of college and university presidents: A study by Inside Higher Ed and Gallup*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/system/files/booklets/IHE-2019-Survey-College-University-Presidents-20190308.pdf>
- Jaschik, S., & Lederman, D. (2018). *2018 Survey of college and university presidents: A study by Inside Higher Ed and Gallup*. Retrieved from [https://www.insidehighered.com/system/files/media/2018\\_presidents\\_survey\\_final.pdf](https://www.insidehighered.com/system/files/media/2018_presidents_survey_final.pdf)
- Kennedy, J. F. (1964). *A nation of immigrants*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Kim, D., Wolf-Wendel, L., & Twombly, S. (2011). International faculty: Experiences of academic life and productivity in US universities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 82(6), 720-747.
- Kim, Y., & Cook, B. (2013). *On the pathway to the presidency: Characteristics of higher education's senior leadership*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. P. (1996). Assets-based community development. *National Civic Review*, 85(4), 23-29.
- Lederman, D. (2019, August 6). New presidents or provosts. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from [https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/08/06/new-presidents-or-provosts-fort-lewis-furman-greensburg-kent-morgan-northwestern?utm\\_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm\\_campaign=6cd3965160-](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/08/06/new-presidents-or-provosts-fort-lewis-furman-greensburg-kent-morgan-northwestern?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=6cd3965160-)

DNU\_2019\_COPY\_01&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_1fcbc04421-6cd3965160-199435245&mc\_cid=6cd3965160&mc\_eid=429b8f4d45

Ledesma, J. (2014). Conceptual frameworks and research models on resilience in leadership. *SAGE Open*, 4(3), 1-8.

Lee, S. (2018). *Servant leadership: A phenomenological study of Southeast Asian women's career advancement experiences in community colleges* (Doctoral dissertation).

University of California, Stanislaus, CA. Retrieved from

<http://130.17.111.21/bitstream/handle/011235813/1307/leessp2018.pdf?sequence=1>

Leipold, B. (2014). Navigating straight waters: The lived experience of how out, White, gay males have successfully navigated the college presidential search process. *Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture*, 5(3), 40-67.

LGBT Presidents in Higher Education. (2012). Retrieved from [www.lgbtpresidents.org](http://www.lgbtpresidents.org)

Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development*, 71(3), 543-562.

Mamiseishvili, K., & Rosser, V. J. (2010). International and citizen faculty in the United States: An examination of their productivity at research universities. *Research in Higher Education*, 51(1), 88-107.

Mamiseishvili, K. (2011a). Characteristics, job satisfaction, and workplace perceptions of foreign-born faculty at public 2-year institutions. *Community College Review*, 39(1), 26-45.

Mamiseishvili, K. (2011b). Teaching workload and satisfaction of foreign-born and US-born faculty at four-year postsecondary institutions in the United States. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 4(3), 163.



- Mamiseishvili, K. (2013). Contributions of foreign-born faculty to doctoral education and research. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2013(163), 89-98.
- Manrique, C. G., & Manrique, G. G. (1999). *The multicultural or immigrant faculty in American society* (Vol. 43). Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Marklein, M. B. (2016, January 8). Value of foreign-born university leaders is rising. *University Worlds News*. Retrieved from [www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20160106153320642](http://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20160106153320642)
- Marvasti, A. (2005). US academic institutions and perceived effectiveness of foreign-born faculty. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 39(1), 151-176.
- Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-238.
- Masten, A. S., Hubbard, J. J., Gest, S. D., Tellegen, A., Garmezy, N., & Ramirez, M. (1999). Competence in the context of adversity: Pathways to resilience and maladaptation from childhood to late adolescence. *Development and Psychopathology*, 11(1), 143-169.
- Mathie, A., & Cunningham, G. (2003). From clients to citizens: Asset-based community development as a strategy for community-driven development. *Development in Practice*, 13(5), 474-486.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design - An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merriam, S. B., Tisdell, E. J. (2009) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage. ISBN 978145225787

- Motti-Stefanidi, F., & Masten, A. S. (2017). A resilience perspective on immigrant youth adaptation and development. In N. J. Cabrera & B. Leyendecker (Eds.), *Handbook on positive development of minority children and youth* (pp. 19-34). New York, NY: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Oikelome, G. (2017). Pathway to the president: The perceived impact of identity structures on the journey experiences of women college presidents. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(3), 23-40.
- Office of the Secretary Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research: The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/index.html>.
- Omiteru, E., Martinez, J., Tsemunhu, R., & Asola, E. F. (2018). Higher education experiences of international faculty in the US deep south. *Journal of Multicultural Affairs*, 3(2), 1-19.
- Paris, D., & Winn, M. T. (2014). *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Parkins, N. (2010). Push and pull factors of migration. *American Review of Political Economy*, 8(2), 6-24.
- Patterson, J. L., & Kelleher, P. (2005). *Resilient school leaders: Strategies for turning adversity into achievement*. Retrieved from <https://search-ebshost-com.libproxy.bellarmino.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=335504&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

- Rankin, S., Weber, G., Blumenfeld, W., & Frazer, S. (2010). *2010 state of higher education for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people*. Charlotte, NC: Campus Pride.
- Rashid, R., & Gregory, D. (2014). Not giving up on life: Holistic exploration of resilience among a sample of immigrant Canadian women. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, *46*(1), 197-214.
- Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative Research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical and methodological*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Robinson, T. L. (2018). *The perceptions and lived experiences of African American male presidents in California community colleges* (Doctoral dissertation). University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA. Retrieved from <https://repository.usfca.edu/diss/419>
- Rodríguez, F. C. (2005). *Immigrant lives and presidential dreams: Exploring the experiences of Latino community college presidents* (Doctoral dissertation). Oregon State University, Eugene, OR. Retrieved from [https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/graduate\\_thesis\\_or\\_dissertations/g158bk58t?locale=en](https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/graduate_thesis_or_dissertations/g158bk58t?locale=en)
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Selingo, J. J., Chheng, S., Clark, C. (2017). *Pathways to the university presidency: The future of higher education leadership*. New York, NY: Deloitte University Press.
- Seltzer, R. (2017, April 19). Making a modern president. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/04/19/report-finds-unsettled-pathways-college-presidency>.
- Singh, A. A., Hays, D. G., Chung, Y. B., & Watson, L. (2010). South Asian immigrant women who have survived child sexual abuse: Resilience and healing. *Violence Against Women*, *16*(4), 444-458.

- Skachkova, P. (2007). Academic careers of immigrant women professors in the US. *Higher Education*, 53(6), 697-738.
- Skinner, R. A. (2018a). A profile of and generational change in the leadership of American research-intensive universities. *American Association of University Administrators*, 33(2), 136-144.
- Skinner, R. A. (2018b). Globalizing the academic presidency: competing for talented leadership. *International Higher Education* (92), 6-7. doi: <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.92.10274>
- Song, W., & Hartley, H. V., III. (2012). *A study of presidents of independent colleges and universities*. Retrieved from <https://www.cic.edu/resources-research/research-studies-reports>
- Theobald, R. B. (2007). *Foreign-born early-career faculty in American higher education: The case of the discipline of geography* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Colorado at Boulder. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/openview/9cce284ebf814007867a27eb91feb586/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
- Thompson, C., & Walsh, G.M. (2015, November 15). Missouri would likely be alone with 10 percent Black faculty. *Associated Press Big Story*. Retrieved from <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/nation/2015/11/17/universities-racial-balance/75915480/>
- Turner, C. S. V. (2007). Pathways to the presidency: Biographical sketches of women of color firsts. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77, 1–38.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2012, May 17). Most children younger than 1 are minorities. *Census*

- Bureau Reports*. Retrieved from  
<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-90.html>
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *Digest of education statistics: 2015*. Retrieved from  
[http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/ch\\_3.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/ch_3.asp)
- Vagle, M. D. (2014). *Crafting phenomenological research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast.
- Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast.
- Welsh, E. A., & Brodsky, A. E. (2010). After every darkness is light: Resilient Afghan women coping with violence and immigration. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 1*(3), 163-174.
- Wessel, R. D., & Keim, M. C. (1994). Career patterns of private four-year college and university presidents in the United States. *The Journal of Higher Education, 65*(2), 211-225.
- Wrighten, K. C. (2018). *Developing a diverse pipeline for community college leadership* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Maryland University College. Retrieved from  
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/2055269294?pq-origsite=gscholar>
- Zong, J., & Batalova, J. (2016 February 3). College-educated immigrants in the United States. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved from  
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/college-educated-immigrants-united-states>

**Appendix A**  
**Interview Email Request**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Kristie Johnson and I am a Ph.D. candidate at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky in the PhD in Leadership in Higher Education program. I am contacting you because I am interested in exploring and documenting the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents and how their cultural background and traditions have prepared them to lead academic institutions in the United States and also how being an immigrant influences their leadership. Would you be interested in participating in this research study?

Participation includes completing an initial biographical survey, participating in an interview that will last between 45-60 minutes, as well as a phone call to follow up on any questions that may arise from the initial interview. In addition, participants will be asked to provide a copy of their curriculum vitae and press release statements from their institution announcing their appointment. Requirements for participating in this study include being a current or former college or university president based in the United States; participants must have held this position within the last ten years; participants must self-identify as an immigrant of Color or foreign-born individual of Color; and, must have attended an undergraduate or graduate school in the United States. Please let me know if you are willing to participate, as well as your preferred availability during the timeframe of December 2019 through February 2020.

If you know anyone else who may be interested in participating in this study and meet the criteria, please feel free to forward this email to them. Thank very much for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kristie S. Johnson, M.A.  
PhD Candidate, Leadership in Higher Education Program  
Annsley Frazier Thornton School of Education  
Bellarmine University  
Email: [kjohnson34@bellarmine.edu](mailto:kjohnson34@bellarmine.edu)  
Phone: [REDACTED]

**Appendix B**  
**Informed Consent**



**Foreign-Born College and University Presidents**

DATE

Dear \_\_:

You are being invited to engage in a face-to-face, phone, or video-conference interview about your experience as a foreign-born college or university president at an academic institution based in the United States. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks. Your participation may or may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. The data you provide will be used to have a better understanding of the experiences of foreign-born college and university presidents, how their cultural background and traditions have prepared them to lead and influence their leadership. The study is sponsored by the Department of Higher Education Leadership at Bellarmine University. Your participation in this study will last for up to two months with a biographical survey form and a 45-60-minute interview. Interviews will be conducted via ZOOM and will also be audio recorded. Participants will be asked to provide a copy of their curriculum vitae and press release statements from their institution announcing their appointment. Approximately 8-10 subjects will be invited to participate. The interviews will be transcribed by Kristie Johnson, ZOOM Transcription Service or Rev.com, a third-party company that maintains confidentiality. The interview transcriptions will be matched for accuracy with the audio files and the audio files will be immediately destroyed. Your completed interview responses will be stored on the password personal computer. Your demographic data and other identifying information will be kept separate from the data and your name will not be on any of the data. Individuals from the Department of Leadership and Higher Education at the Annsley Frazier Thornton School of Education and the Bellarmine University Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. Although absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed. Participants of this study will not receive compensation.

Please remember that your participation in this study is voluntary. By completing the interview, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You may refuse to participate or withdraw your consent at any time without penalty or losing benefit to which you are otherwise entitled. You are free to decline to answer any particular question that may make you feel uncomfortable or which may render you prosecutable under law.

You acknowledge that all your present questions have been answered in a language you can understand. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Kristie Johnson at [REDACTED] or Donald Mitchell, Jr. at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Institutional Review Board (IRB) office at [REDACTED]. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in confidence, with a member of the committee. This is an independent committee composed of members of the University community and lay members of the community not connected with this institution. The IRB has reviewed this study.

Sincerely,

Kristie S. Johnson

Ph.D. Candidate, Leadership in Higher Education

This Form Letter Last revised 11-22-19



## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Questions**

1. How has your cultural background and traditions prepared you to lead an institution of higher education?
2. How has your cultural background and traditions influenced your leadership of this academic institution?
3. Please share your journey/pipeline to your current position of president?
4. What were some challenges you encountered on your path to the presidency?
5. What were some opportunities you encountered on your path to the presidency?
6. An asset-based community development framework will be applied to this research (explain what that is). After hearing about the asset-based community development framework, what assets do you feel you bring to the office of the president? The larger academic community? And, the community in which you are located in the United States?
7. How do you think these assets are unique compared to native born college or university presidents?
8. The ways in which foreign-born/immigrants demonstrate resiliency is an important aspect of this research, how have you as an immigrant, feel you have/or do demonstrate resiliency in the context of your role as a college/university president?
9. How do you feel you demonstrate resiliency as a member of U.S. society?

## Appendix D

### Participant Information Sheet

<b>Which continent were you born?</b>	
<b>How long have you been in the U.S.?</b>	
<b>Are you currently a college or university president?</b>	
<b>How long have you been a college or university president?</b>	
<b>If you are a former college or university president, how long did you serve at your former institution?</b>	
<b>Did you attend undergraduate or graduate school in the U.S.?</b>	
<b>Institution Size (circle one)</b>	<b>Small – 2,999 or less</b> <b>Medium – 3,000 to 5,000</b> <b>Large – 5,001 or more</b>
<b>What is your religious affiliation, if any?</b>	
<b>Besides English, what other languages do you speak?</b>	
<b>What is your age range?</b>	<b>Less than 40</b> <b>Between 41-50</b> <b>Between 51-60</b> <b>Between 61-70</b> <b>Between 71-80</b>
<b>What is your gender identity?</b>	