UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINO/A NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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presented by Miguel Ayllon,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Casandra Harper, Chair

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Professor Tony Castro
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation first to God. He has always provided opportunity, strength, health, and the best support system of family and friends to carry me through my educational journey. I am very grateful for my wife Jessica and daughter Gabriela for their support, patience, and flexibility through this long journey. I would also like to thank my parents for instilling in me the value of perseverance and the desire to dream big. This Ph.D. completion is not a personal accomplishment because my life, career, and education are all a community project. I would have never been able to complete this Ph.D. without the steadfast support of my family, friends, advisors, faculty, and peer students in the ELPA program.

I also want to send my most sincere gratitude to Jose and Maria for sharing their rich lives and experiences for the completion of this study. I feel humbled and inspired by their stories of sacrifice, courage, redemption, tenacity, and entrepreneurship. May I continue to advocate for their stories to be heard. May I use this Ph.D. to speak for justice and to defend the right of the poor and needy in higher education.
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UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCES OF LATINO/A NON-ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

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ABSTRACT

Using a narrative methodology of inquiry framed by an intersectionality theoretical framework, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to use testimonios to explore and describe the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees (i.e., staff who work in service/maintenance jobs) at MU. This research study ultimately attempted to generate knowledge about the professional, educational, and personal journeys of traditionally marginalized workers.

The central question of this study was: what are the life histories of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU and do issues of identity, power, and hierarchy emerge within those testimonios? One secondary question is: What opportunities do Latino/a non-academic employees have to develop their professional and educational careers?

Using an intersectionality framework of analysis, this study presented the lived experiences and personal narratives of Jose and Maria within the context of the study research questions. This empirical qualitative study described the importance of knowing and understanding the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU.
CHAPTER 1

The racial/ethnic diversity of the US population has significantly increased in the past 30 years, and Latinos/as are transforming the definition of what it means to be an American (Nuñez 2014; Rennie, 2015). Latinos/as now constitute 17% of the US total population of 313.9 million (U.S. Census, 2011), and by 2060, Latinos/as are projected to become 119 million—more than 30% of the US population (Krogstad, 2014; Nuñez 2014; Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). This remarkable growth of the Latino/a population is leading a demographic transformation with the potential to change the educational, political, and economic dynamics of the nation (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011; Reddy, 2011). For instance, if Latinos/as in the U.S. were a country, they would rank 16th in the world with a combined purchasing power of $1.1 trillion (Rennie, 2015). Nevertheless, these stunning statistics and media reports fail to account for the full stories of the Latino/a journey in the U.S.

It is troublesome that although the Latino/a population is one of the fastest growing populations in the country, Latinos/as still are severely underrepresented in higher education (Carter; 2013; Delgado-Romero, Manlove, Manlove, Hernandez, 2007; De Luca & Escoto, 2012; Flores & Garcia 2009; Huber & Cueva, 2012; Verdugo, 2003). Research studies show that Latino/a faculty members benefit higher education by improving Latino/a students’ higher education persistence and degree completion rates, serving as mentors, and enhancing a diverse educational learning environment for student outcomes (Hurtado, 2001; Ponjuan 2011). However, recent data figures show that Latinos/as only represent just 4% of faculty (instruction and research) in academia, compared to Whites (74%), African Americans (7%), and Asians (6%) (Santiago, Galdeano, Taylor, 2015). There is also a limited body of knowledge on the
higher education experiences of Latinos/as. For instance, no clear data have been collected on the number of Latinos/as working in non-academic positions in the US higher education system. Additionally, the works of scholars such as Aleman (2009); Castellanos, Gloria, and Kamimura (2005); Turner, Sotello, Gonzales, and Wood (2008); and Verdugo (2003) amongst others, reveal that Latino/a students, faculty, and staff experience more discrimination and barriers to opportunity in higher education. Thus, I strongly believe that it is essential to conduct a research study on the experiences of an understudied and underrepresented group in higher education.

The University of Missouri (MU), a historically White institution where this study takes place, mirrors the Latino/a national higher education deficit with 3% of undergraduate and graduate students; 4% of tenured faculty; 1.3% of executive, managerial, professional staff; and 8% of service/maintenance staff (Mizzou Diversity n.d.). I have been working at MU for 8 years as a student affairs professional in the professional/managerial human resources category, and I can count with my fingers the number of Latino/as tenured faculty in this campus. In one hand, there are currently no Latino/a curators, senior administrators, or deans at MU. Having participated in several campus recruitment interviews, Latino/a scholars and professional that work at MU are hired through isolated departmental hiring processes and not as part of a bigger institutionalized strategy to recruit Latino/a talent. On the other hand, the needs of Latino/a students are eclipsed by the historically charged climate and continuous “White versus Black” discourses in our campus. I have not seen any stories of prominent Latino/a alumni donating funds to MU fundraising campaigns. MU attempts to serve Latino/a faculty, staff, and students through isolated efforts that often lack the vision, sustainable funding, political muscle, and the clear understanding of the complex and nuanced nature of Latinos/as as a vibrant group. Chapter
three of this dissertation will offer a more in depth account into the campus climate and context of MU.

According to the Associated Press and other media outlets, the 2015-2016 academic year was one of the most challenging years in the history of MU as the university experienced a severe racial crisis (Arkin, Schuppe, & Johnson, 2015; Favignano, 2015; Keller & Stice, 2016; Loufti & Blatchford, 2016; Williams & Palmer 2016). In November, 2015, after a series of racial incidents were reported against African American students on the MU campus and the passivity of the MU administration to address these issues, graduate student Jonathan Butler, at the time a member of the student group Concerned Student 1950, began a hunger strike that led to the removal of the university system President, Mr. Tim Wolfe, and the university Chancellor, Dr. Bowen Loftin. The MU November 2015 crisis was also marked by graduate student health insurance and unionization issues, the “no confidence” vote of nine deans against former Chancellor Loftin, and the eventual employment termination of professor Melissa Click for freedom of speech charges against a student journalist. On top of everything, the state of Missouri legislation continued to cut funding for MU (Arkin, Schuppe, & Johnson, 2015).

In addition to the negative media attention, MU experienced an enrollment decline of more than 1,500 students for the fall 2016 causing a $32 million of budget deficit (Keller & Stice, 2016). Many academic and non-academic units at the university were forced to lay off several employees as a result of this financial deficit (Keller, 2016). Not surprisingly, most of the employees affected by the layoffs were staff members in non-academic, low-grade labor intensive positions as well as non-tenure track and adjunct faculty. For instance, the Division of Operations laid-off more than 50 employees during the summer (Keller, 2016).
Statement of the Problem

The U.S. society has a racial and social inequality problem that has influenced the experiences of Latinos/as in American society and specifically in higher education (Frey 2010; Nuñez, 2014). Despite the recent growth of the Latino/a population in the US, Latinos/a in higher education experience a wide range of challenges to attain success (Aleman, 2009; Castellanos et al., 2005; Turner et al., 2008; Verdugo, 2003). This contradiction makes it essential to produce relevant scholarship that unveils the challenges that Latinos/as face in higher education (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012, Gracia 2008; Rodriguez, 2012) to better inform administrators on the work experiences of Latinos/as in higher education. My goal for this empirical qualitative study was to describe the importance of knowing and understanding the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU.

Purpose of the Study

I conducted this study because Latinos/as are underrepresented at all levels of higher education, and because there is limited research on the experiences of Latinos/as in higher education, specifically Latino/a non-academic employees (Carter; 2013; Delgado-Romero et al., 2007; DeLuca & Escoto, 2012; Flores & Garcia 2009; Huber & Cueva, 2012; Verdugo, 2003). Using a narrative methodology of inquiry framed by an intersectionality theoretical framework, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to use testimonios to explore and describe the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees (i.e., staff who work in labor intensive service/maintenance jobs) at MU. This research study ultimately attempted to generate knowledge about the professional, educational, and personal journeys of traditionally marginalized workers. Thus, I hope this study served to pave the way to advance a more in-depth and inclusive study of Latinos/as in higher education scholarship.
Research Questions

The central question of this study was: what are the life histories of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU and do issues of identity, power, and hierarchy emerge within those testimonios? One secondary question is: What opportunities do Latino/a non-academic employees have to develop their professional and educational advancement? The research questions explored in this study provided an understanding of specific issues that serve to disadvantage and exclude individuals or cultures, such as racism, sexism, unequal power relations, identity, or inequities in our society (Creswell, 2013). The Latino/a population in the U.S. continues to grow dramatically and this study was timely to understand the Latino/a population’s influence in the U.S. workforce and higher education. Answering these research questions may help campus administrators, scholars, and practitioners, to understand and improve the experience of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU.

Research Design

This qualitative narrative study explored and created understanding of the lives (Creswell, 2013) of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU. Testimonio was chosen as the specific narrative methodological tool for this study because it advocates for Latin Americans and offers a personal account that allows researchers to engage in deeper personal access of the topic of study with thick description of personal experiences (Beverly, 2005; Esparza 2012; Huber & Cueva, 2012). A purposeful sampling technique was used to recruit two Latino/a employees working in non-academic positions at MU. Consistent with narrative inquiry and my intersectionality theoretical framework, I used semi-structured in-depth interviews as the principal means to collect data because interviews offer powerful ways to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect
those issues (Hammersley, 2008; Riesmann, 2008; Seidman, 2013; Spector-Mersel, 2010). I followed Seidman’s three interview-series approach. The first interview established the context of my participants’ experience (Seidman, 2013). The second interview allowed my participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which occurs (Seidman, 2013). Finally, the third interview encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experiences hold for them (Seidman, 2013).

**Significance of the Study**

This narrative research study contributed to the field of higher education in five specific ways. First, this empirical study contributed with a more holistic and multidimensional understanding of the identity (Harper, 2011) and lived experiences of Latinos/as working in non-academic positions in higher education. In many ways, research focusing on the unique experiences of individuals who belong to two or more social groups (e.g., non-Catholic Latinos/as) is still in its infancy in the field of higher education (Harper, 2011; Museus & Griffin, 2011). Secondly, this study contributed to the existing intersectionality literature that emphasizes the socioeconomic and international dimensions of intersectionality (McCall, 2005). Intersectionality has been more developed conceptually and empirically in feminist studies, and sociology, but the influence of intersectionality in higher education is limited (Nuñez, 2014). Thus, a greater emphasis on using intersectionality in higher education will contribute to important advancements in the field (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Third, historically there has been a lack of specification of the concept of power in higher education scholarship that goes beyond race issues. Most research on power struggles in the workplace appears in sociology journals (Stainback, Ratliff, Roscigno, 2011). Thus, this study contributed to the body of literature in higher education by adding an empirical study on the domains of power within higher education.

Despite the emergence of intersectionality as a major research framework in women’s studies and other related fields, there has been little discussion on how to actually study and apply intersectionality as a methodology of research (McCall, 2005). Thus, methodologically, a fourth contribution of this study to higher education scholarship was the tracing of methodological guidelines for the use of intersectionality in research. Finally, on a larger scale, this study will guide and humanize the higher education policy making of administrators and scholars working with underrepresented non-academic employees.

**Background of the Study**

In March 2013, I conducted the “Understanding the Experiences of Latino/a Blue Collar Employees in a Predominantly White Mid-Western Higher Education Institution” pilot research study which I presented as a research paper at the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) conference in Saint Louis, MO in November 2013. For this pilot study, I interviewed two foreign born Latino/a blue collar employees and learned about their immigration journeys in the U.S. and how they became employees at the mid-western institution. Through this pilot study, I obtained rich and thick narrative descriptions from my participants’ stories that provided insight into their professional, educational, and personal contexts. Conducting this pilot research study on Latino/a service/maintenance employees helped me gain preliminary understanding on how to conduct a larger scale study for my dissertation.

**Definition of Terms: Hispanic vs Latino/a**

It is necessary to clarify the use of the identity terms “Hispanic” and “Latino/a” (Nuñez, 2014). The term “Hispanic” originated in 1977 after the U.S. Office of Management and Budget
officials approved the term to count people of Hispanic origin (including those from Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Spanish-speaking Caribbean, Central, and South American countries) in the 1980 Census (Mora 2014; Rodriguez, 2000). Therefore, the term Hispanic is perceived by some to be an externally imposed, inaccurate, and marginalizing term, raising connotations of a history of Spanish colonization and associations with Spain, rather than with countries in the Americas, which comprise the origin of most of this population’s members (Oboler, 1995). Other people from Latin American or Spanish origins would actually prefer to be called Hispanic based on the regional and generation background. By contrast, the social construction term Latino/a evolved from grassroots heritage and has become an “irreducible” social category in the sense that I includes US-born and non-US born Latinos/as regardless of race and ethnicity (Anthias, 2013). With the initial intent to serve as an ethnic category, Latino has also often been used to denote race (Mora 2014; Rodriguez, 2000). The category Latino/a includes a multiplicity of heritages and national origins, encompassing a variety of cultures, languages, races, and phenotypes (Mora, 2014; Rumbaut 2011; Saenz, 2010). The term Latino/a is also perceived as (a) less marginalizing; (b) more determined by the population group itself; and (c) more accurate, because the term Latino/a implies a connection to the Americas through the terminology of Latin America and its nations (Oboler, 1995). Thus, throughout my dissertation, for semantic purposes I use the term Latino/a instead of Hispanic to fully appreciate the richness and complexity of this population group.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

In this introductory dissertation chapter, I outlined the research problem, the purpose, significance, overview of the background, context, and research questions that provide the basis for my study of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU. In chapter two, I will examine the
current literature pertaining to the interconnection of Latino/a’ demographics, higher education, and workforce. Chapter three will describe the research design of my study including: methodology and research design; my research positionality; population and sample; sampling procedures; data collection procedures; data analysis; measures of trustworthiness, and limitations. In chapter four, I will present the results of the study. Finally, in chapter five, I will provide implications for future research, practice, and theory.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section presents a synthesis that explains the rationale for the problem and position of this research study within the ongoing and larger literature of Latinos/as in higher education (Creswell, 2013). To conduct this research synthesis, I reviewed several bodies of literature within the field of higher education and social sciences that contextualize the experiences of Latino/a faculty, academic and non-academic staff, and students in higher education (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). I also reviewed the most recent statistics available on Latinos/as in higher education. This literature review section specifically identifies and discusses the following key research topics to further advance the understanding of the journeys of Latinos/as in U.S. higher education and the implications for future research and practice: (a) Latinos/as’ demographics and immigration trends; (b) the emerging Latino/a workforce; (c) overview of Latinos/as in the education pipeline; (d) the intersectionality theoretical framework; and (e) bridging the research gap. Most of the literature summarized and synthetized in this section is centered on the experiences of Latino/a faculty and students because of the limited current literature on Latino/a non-academic university employees. Nevertheless, this section strives to serve as an overarching frame of reference to trace informed parallels and comparisons among the experiences of all Latino/as involved in the higher education process.

**Latino/a Demographics and Immigration Trends**

One in six Americans is now Latino/a, and by 2060, when ethnographers predict that there will be no racial or ethnic majority among the general population of the U.S, it is projected that the Latino/a population will double to 30% (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Rennie, 2015). Consequently, the role of Latinos/as in shaping the U.S. political and economic climate is
becoming more significant (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Mexican Americans make up the largest subgroup of Latinos/as at 63% and, at 38%, have the largest proportion of people under the age of 18 (Kochhar, 2014). According to the U.S. Census 2010, the states with the largest Latino/a populations were California (14 million), Texas (9.5 million), Florida (4.2 million), New York (3.4 million), and Illinois (1.2 million). While the majority of Latinos/as are native-born U.S. citizens, there is a sizable proportion that is foreign born, which a fraction of those lack legal status (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Pew Hispanic Center, 2013; Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). The lack of a comprehensive immigration reform has had a disproportionate effect on Latinos/as since a total of 16.6 million people, many of Latino/a origin, live in mixed-status families with at least one unauthorized immigrant family member (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012).

The rise of Latinos/as is making America much younger as they now account for one in four people under age 18 (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011; Reddy, 2011; Rennie, 2015). The median age of Whites is 42 and Blacks 32, yet among American-born Latinos/as, the median age is a stunning 18 (Motel & Patten, 2012; Rennie, 2015). As other parts of the rich world face a future of ageing, shrinking populations, Latinos/as are keeping American schoolyards full of children which ought to bring hope and optimism to supply future students, faculty, and staff to our higher education system and workforce (Kochhar, 2014; Rennie, 2015).

The public discourse on Latino/a demographics has historically focused primarily on illegal immigration from Latin America (Casselman, 2014). Yet most new immigrants are not Latinos/as and most Latinos/as are not immigrants (Casselman, 2014). As immigration continues to be a hot topic of discussion, the foreign born-population in the U.S. continues to grow (Casselman, 2014). In 2012 there were more than 40 million people living in the U.S. who were not born here, up 31% since 2000; and the native-born population grew just 9% over that
time (Casselman, 2014). The Great Recession, a tepid jobs recovery, tighter border controls and more deportations have served to mitigate migration to the U.S. from Latin America, especially Mexico, in recent years (Casselman, 2014; Kochhar, 2014). However, migration from other countries such as China and India continues to rise (Casselman, 2014). Thus, Asia has surpassed Latin America as the dominant source of new immigrants to the U.S. Asia accounted for 45% of all new immigrants in 2012, compared to 34% for Latin America (Casselman, 2014). Although immigrants from Latin America are usually poorer and less educated than native-born Americans, Asian immigrants are wealthier and better educated - not just compared to other immigrants but also compared to native-born Americans (Casselman, 2014).

Diversity Climate for Latinos/as in the US

As the presence of Latinos/as has increased in the U.S. population, resistance to Latinos/as’ incorporation to society has intensified (Frey, 2010; Nuñez, 2014). For example, the state of Arizona has developed laws that permit law enforcement officers to detain any individual who could be perceived as an undocumented immigrant and the state has also banned K-12 ethnic studies programs (Frey, 2010; Nuñez, 2014). Furthermore, one recent national poll indicated that eight in ten (79%) Latinos/a, regardless of citizenship or immigrant status, feel that at some point, they “will get stopped or questioned by police” for any potential reason (Menjivar & Abrego 2012, p.2).

Recent events of profound national ramifications such as the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, the killing of nine African Americans at a Christian church in Charleston, SC, the approval of Obama’s health care reform act, the legalization of gay marriage, and the public bashing of Mexican immigrants by Republican president-elect, Donald Trump, unveil the charged and fragmented current state of contemporary American culture and society. The
aftermath of such events has ignited inflammatory public discourse in topics such as race, gender, sex orientation, Christianity, Islam, immigration, gun control, amongst others. Inevitably, the fragmentation of American society also affects higher education and the people in it. As noted by the U.S.’ current racially charged climate, the concept about an American identity highlights the complex interconnection among race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, and socio-economic status (Harper, 2011), which begs to ask the question: what does it mean to be an American and how this definition affects higher education? To strengthen the future of American higher education it is important to clearly define the answer of this question and commit to educate all Americans regardless of race, socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, or other social identity (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Kochhar, 2014; Santiago et al., 2015).

**Latinos/as in Missouri**

The rapid growth of the Latino population in the U.S. is particularly noteworthy in mid-western states as the Latino/a population figures increased by 49%, which is more than 12 times the growth of the total population in the region (U.S. Census, 2011). Recent U.S. Census figures demonstrate that the percentage of Latinos/as in the state of Missouri is continuously increasing each year, becoming an increasingly important sector of Missouri’s population (U.S. Census, 2011). For many years, most immigrants headed to six states- New York, California, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois. However, after California hardened its instance in the mid-1990s, new “destination states” with little experience with immigrants such as Missouri began receiving new immigrants, including undocumented ones (Dine, 2010). Many Latinos/as who have immigrated to new destination U.S. communities, such as Missouri, over the last 40 years have become the first generation of immigrant farmers and ranchers in the communities where they settled (Gonzalez, Jeanetta, & O’Brien, 2014). In Missouri, most Latino/a farmers and
ranchers are considered beginner farmers, and are still becoming assimilated into the broader community (Gonzalez et al., 2014).

The Latino/a share of Missouri’s population grew 3.6% (or 216,372 people) in 2011 and today Missouri has roughly the 30th largest Latino/a population in the U.S (U.S. Census, 2011). Latinos/as in Missouri work in production, transportation, sales or offices, but they are also business owners (Idelfonso, 2012). Latinos/as are also present in farms, factories, universities, business, and politics, and step-by-step, they are working on the social assimilation process of Missouri society (Idelfonso, 2012). In 2011 the Latino/a unemployment rate in Missouri was 8.3% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

The Latino/a population in Missouri is also young with a median age of 24, compared to 39 for White non-Hispanics (Excelencia, 2010). As the young Latino/a population continues to grow in the Midwest, it becomes more evident that Latinos/as and their families are here to stay (Idelfonso, 2012; Jeanetta & Valdivia, 2015). Nevertheless, the state’s principal challenge is social assimilation (Idelfonso, 2012). Prosper and resilient communities have long eradicated marginalization, and are more focused on how to integrate and become a more pluralistic society. This indeed is a high call for the state of Missouri if their communities want to become vibrant and relevant for the 21st century (Jeanetta & Valdivia, 2015).

Undocumented immigrants in Missouri. Unauthorized immigrants comprised roughly 0.9% of the state’s population (or 55,000 people) in 2010 (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). If all unauthorized immigrants were removed from Missouri, the state would lose $2.3 billion in economic activity, $1.0 billion in gross state product, and approximately 13,859 jobs, even accounting for adequate market adjustment time (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). Moreover,
Unauthorized immigrants in Missouri paid $44 million in state and local taxes in 2010 (Immigration Policy Center, 2015).

**Immigrants in Missouri: Purchasing power and entrepreneurship.** Latinos/as and Asians account for growing shares of the economy and population in Missouri (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). Latinos/as and Asians (both foreign born and native born) wield $9.8 billion in consumer purchasing power, and the business they own have sales and receipts of $5.1 billion and employ more than 34,000 people (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). At a time when the economy is still recovering, Missouri cannot afford to alienate such a critical component of its labor force, tax base, and business community (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). Latino/a entrepreneurs and consumers add billions of dollars and thousands of jobs to Missouri’s economy (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). The 2012 purchasing power of Latinos/as in Missouri totaled $4.9 billion.

**The Emerging Latino/a Workforce**

**Overview of the Latino/a Workforce in the US**

In 2012 Latinos/as represented 16% of the U.S. labor force at nearly 25 million workers, and by 2018, Latinos/as will comprise 18% of the labor force (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Santiago et al. 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). For the first time in nearly 2 decades, immigrants do not account for the majority of Latino/a workers in the U.S. (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Kochhar, 2014). In 2011 more than half (52.2%) of the Latino/a labor force was foreign born, compared to 15.9% of the overall labor force (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Historically, foreign-born Latinos/as have experienced lower unemployment rates than native-born Latinos (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Furthermore, of Latinos/as in the labor force, 58% are
men, and 42% are women, slightly smaller than the 46% of women who make up the White labor force (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012).

The U.S. workforce has recently grown more diverse particularly among young adults, and Latinos/as have higher younger labor force participation compared to other groups (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Santiago et al. 2015). In 2013, 66% of Latinos/as 16 years and older participated in the labor force, compared to Asians (65%), Whites (64%), and Americans (61%) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Overall, White and Latino men are employed at higher rates than are White and Latina women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Latinos/as are less likely to work for government, and they are more likely than either Whites or African Americans to be employed in the private sector, with more than eight in ten employed Latinos/as working in the private sector, not including the self-employed (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012).

The percentage of Latino/a unemployment is higher than their total population (Santiago et al. 2015). States with larger Latino/a populations have a larger number of unemployed Latinos/as (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Latinos/as represent 20% of the unemployed population looking for full time work, and 19% of the total unemployed population looking for part-time work (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Latinos/as have higher rates on unemployment compared to other groups, except for African Americans (Santiago et al., 2015).

Despite the U.S. challenges for social mobility - where it is becoming more difficult to move from a lower to a higher socioeconomic status - Latinos/as have been projected to continue to be the largest minority group with high growth rates in the labor force expected to make up 30% of the U.S. labor force in 2050 (Meinert, 2013; Schultz, 2012; Toossi, 2005). When many would have wrongly pointed out to immigration, the economy and education are top issues that Latinos/as consider extremely important to them personally (Krogstad, 2014). However, Fuller
and McElmurry (2011) describe the challenge for Latinos/as is that they have limited opportunities to receive higher education and pursue superior professional careers. 

**Latinos/as: Work by industry.** Latinos/as historically have had a strong presence in blue-collar industries (Rodriguez, 2012). Although many young Latinos/as are attending college and making their way into the White collar work force, the majority of Latino/as are employed in blue collar jobs such as construction, eating, drinking, and lodging services; wholesale and retail trade; and professional and other business services (Kochhar, 2014; Rodriguez 2012). These industries were also at the center of employment change for Latinos/as during the recession and the recovery while they also accounted for 45.5% of the jobs growth for Latinos/as from 2009 to 2013 (Kochhar, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2012).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), Latinos/as represented 20% of management, professional, and related occupations, compared to Asians (50%), Whites (39%), and African Americans (29%). On the other hand, Latinos/as were significantly overrepresented in lower paying service occupations in 2013 as they represented 50% of agricultural workers, 45% of grounds maintenance workers, and 44% of housekeeping workers (Santiago et al., 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

The construction industry has historically also employed a high percentage of Latino/a workers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Latinos/as account for almost one in every four workers in the construction industry. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) projects that the construction industry will grow by 2.9% annually through 2020. This growth should greatly benefit Latinos/as, who are overrepresented in this industry; the majority of this growth, however, will be coming from regained jobs that were lost during the recession (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). The health care and social assistance industry is projected to grow the most, with
an additional 5.6 million jobs projected between now and 2020 (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Unfortunately, Latinos/as are currently severely underrepresented in the health and social assistance industry, the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) occupations accounting only for 10.4% of these jobs (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

**Unauthorized immigrants in the labor force.** The U.S. unauthorized immigrant workforce now holds fewer blue collar jobs and more white collar ones that it did before the 2007-2009 recession, but a solid majority still works in low-skilled service, construction, and production occupations (Passel & Cohn, 2015; Pew Hispanic Center, 2013; Wile 2015). The number of unauthorized immigrants in management or professional related jobs grew by 180,000 while the number in construction or production jobs fell by about 475,000, mirroring rises and declines in the overall U.S. economy (Passel & Cohn, 2015). Despite these advances, undocumented workers’ representation among all white-collar occupations remains low- just 2%.

Agriculture has replaced construction as the industry with the largest share of undocumented workers (Wile, 2015). Sixteen percent of all agricultural workers were undocumented as of 2012, the most recent year for which data were available, that compares with 12% for construction (Wile, 2015; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Unauthorized immigrant workers remain concentrated in lower-skills jobs, much more so than U.S.- born worker (Wile, 2015).

Unauthorized immigrants are far less educated, on average, than legal immigrants or the U.S.-born; they are both more likely not to have graduated high school and less likely to have attended college (Passel & Cohn, 2015). Lack of education and limits due to their status, helps explain the concentration of undocumented in low-skilled occupations (Passel & Cohn, 2015).
**Latinos/as and moving/ relocation.** As for all Americans, Latino/a employment is affected by place of residence (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Latinos/as tend to move within states and counties, indicating they are more likely to move for employment opportunities (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Studies have also found that the employment of Latinos/as is particularly sensitive to the density of jobs held by other Latinos/as (Hellersterin & Neumark, 2009). This correlation suggests that networks may play a key role for Latinos/as (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Hellersterin & Neumark, 2009).

**Latino/a worker earnings.** Latinos/as represented a significantly reduced portion of the workforce employed in the highest paying occupations than other groups (Kochhar, 2014; Santiago et al. 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). The wages of Latino/a workers have risen modestly since 2007 which originated from the changing composition of the Latino/a workforce (Kochhar, 2014; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Latinos/as income is not as high as the earnings of Whites, and Latino/a immigrants earn less than U.S. born Latinos/as (Kochhar, 2014; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). In 2011 half of Latinos/as working full time earned at least a $549 per week wage, which was only 71% of that earned by Whites (Kochhar, 2014; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Some of the wage differences between Latinos/as and non-Latinos/as can also be explained by the usual differences in education, work experience, language proficiency, demographic characteristics, and time since arrival (Kochhar, 2014).

**The Latino workforce: A look at the future:** The economic recovery to date has improved employment prospects for all Americans, and indeed Latino/a unemployment rates are lower today than in February 2009 when President Obama launched work on the American Recovery Act (Kochhar, 2014; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). The jobs recovery for
Latinos/as is more driven by demographics than good economic fortune (Kochhar, 2014). The growth in Latino/a employment accounted for 43.4% of the total jobs growth of 6.4 million in the U.S. economy from 2009 to 2013 (Kochhar, 2014). Despite promising trends, it is important to address some the barriers that Latinos/as still experience in the workforce such as high unemployment rates and lower levels of educational attainment (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012).

It is likely that the share of the Latino/a workforce that is U.S. born will continue to increase (Kochhar, 2014). U.S. born Latinos/as currently account for most of the growth in the Latino/a population, and it is uncertain that Latino/a migrants will return to the U.S. workforce in larger numbers (Kochhar, 2014). Some leading economists are of the view that the U.S. has entered a new era of slower economic growth (Kochhar, 2014). If so, jobs growth in the future may not be strong enough to reinvigorate immigration from Latin America (Kochhar, 2014).

It is crucial that educational and economic gaps are closed with one of the fastest growing and youngest population segment in the nation if the U.S. is too have a successful workforce in the 21st century (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Given the growth of the Latino/a community, it is important to invest in this booming young population (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Kochhar, 2014; Santiago et al., 2015). Employers pay workers 50% more on average to workers with a college degree (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Investing in education amid growing demographic changes is crucial to building our workforce for tomorrow (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Latinos/as can also contribute to national defense. In the coming years Latinos/as are projected to make up even more of the veteran population- Latinas comprise 9% of all military veterans and Latinos comprise 7% of veterans by 2020 (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Kochhar, 2014; Santiago et al., 2015).
The number of Latino/a immigrants entering the U.S. year is expected to continue to rise, and U.S. workplaces are beginning to see larger numbers of Latinas and Latinos, not just in lower status occupations but also across upward organizational hierarchies (Alvarez, 2011). In spite of the dramatic growth of the Latino/a population affecting higher education demographics (Reddy, 2011), the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees remain understudied within higher education (Carter; 2013; Delgado-Romero et al., 2007; De Luca & Escoto, 2012; Flores & Garcia 2009; Huber & Cueva, 2012; Verdugo, 2003). Consequently, policymakers and higher education leaders may know little about Latino/a non-academic employees journeys for professional development and success.

In 2013, Latinos/as represented 20% of management and professional occupations, yet the problem is that this not the case in the higher education context (Santiago et al., 2015). As we look toward the future of American higher education, it is urgent that gaps for Latinos/as in educational and political attainment, in health coverage, and in the labor force are addressed (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Recognizing that each American demographic faces different and unique challenges, it is important that future higher education leaders are trained to acknowledge diverse perspectives and craft policy solutions emerging from an inclusive and thoughtful perspective (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Closing the gaps today will make American higher education much stronger, competitive, and inclusive for the future (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Kochhar, 2014; Santiago et al., 2015).

**Latinos/as in the Education Pipeline**

**Overview**

According to the Pew Hispanic Center (PHC) (2013), the Latino population grew 48%, rising to 51.9 million in 2011 from 35.3 million in 2000. Latinos/as now constitute 17% of the
nation’s total population of 313.9 million (U.S. Census, 2011). The dramatic growth of the Latino/a population continues to alter the demographics of higher education across the nation as the Latino/a college enrollment numbers are also on the rise (Fry & Lopez, 2012; Ponjuan 2011). Although Latino/a students are enrolling in greater numbers and strong research on the topic has been produced (Contreras 2011; Nuñez et al., 2013; Nuñez, 2014), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) revealed the continued underrepresentation of Latino/a faculty and staff in academia as they only represent 3.5% of college personnel in the U.S. (De Luca & Escoto, 2012; Pew Hispanic Center, 2013; Santiago & Brown, 2004). The underrepresentation of Latinos/as in influential areas of academia is also mirrored at the location of this research study, the University of Missouri, Latinos/as are 3% of undergraduate students, 3% of graduate students, 4% of faculty, and 1.3% of staff (Mizzou Diversity, n.d.).

Increasing levels of population growth and high birthrates have made Latinos/as one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the country with a 16% current representation of undergraduate students enrolled in the U.S. (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Santiago et al., 2015; Nuñez 2014; Pew Hispanic Research Center 2008). Latinos/as increased bachelor degree attainment in the last ten years at a faster rate than other groups (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau 2013). With a 56% increase in the number of undergraduate degrees conferred in the last 5 years, in 2013, 3.1 million Latinos/as had actually earned a bachelor degree as their highest degree earned (Santiago et al., 2015). This was a 63% increase from the 1.9 million Latinos/as who held a bachelor degree in 2004 (Santiago et al., 2015). Latino/a college enrollment is projected to increase more than other groups (Santiago et al., 2015). While population growth has aided in the increase of Latino/a college enrollment, increases in high school graduation rates have been key to the booming Latino/a college enrollment numbers and
educational attainment (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). It is also important to note that the growth in Latino/a college enrollment has been primarily at community colleges (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012).

Education has long been recognized as a gateway to success (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). As noted above, the educational achievement among young Latinos/as has improved significantly over past few years and has led to the narrowing the education gap between Latinos/as and other racial and ethnic groups, particularly when it comes to postsecondary education (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Nevertheless, Latinos/as’ postsecondary attainment continues to be lower relative to their representation in the population and the lowest among large racial/ethnic groups constituting an educational crisis (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Contreras 2011; De Luca & Escoto, 2012; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Nuñez; 2014; Santiago & Brown, 2004).

While college enrollment rates have greatly increased among Latinos/as, this does not always translate into college completion as Latinos/as continue to lag behind other racial and ethnic groups in college-completion rates and are still the least educated (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Nuñez, 2014). The lower schooling levels of Latino/a immigrants can partly explain the low college-completion rates (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Latino/a immigrants have lower levels of degree attainment than U.S.- born Latinos/as: 4% of Latino/a immigrants had attained an associate degree, compared to 8% of U.S. born Latinos in 2009 (Santiago et al., 2015). Foreign-born Latinos/as are also less likely to have earned bachelor degrees than U.S.- born Latinos/as with 11% of earned a bachelor’s degree for foreign-born Latinos/as, compared to 18% of US – born Latinos/as (Pew Hispanic Center 2012, 2014).
Although high school dropout rates declined in the last 10 years, Latino/a immigrants were more likely to be high school dropouts than U.S. born Latinos (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012, 2014; Santiago et al., 2015). From 2000 to 2012, the dropout rate of immigrant Latinos/as dropped by more than half (Pew Hispanic Center 2012, 2014). The majority of Latino/a immigrant undergraduates have earned a high school diploma from the United States (Santiago et al., 2015).

If the U.S. is to regain the top ranking in the world for college degree attainment, Latinos/as will need to earn 5.5 million degrees by 2020 (Santiago et al., 2015). This is important because it will represent a significant mitigation of the achievement gap for underrepresented students. Thus, the idea of a permanent Latino/a underclass ought to be combated by states through the provision of more educational funding opportunities for students with low economic resources (Rennie, 2015). Some in ultra conservative America believe that immigrants have created a new underclass that must be pushed back (Rennie, 2015). For instance, Texas used to positively stand out among conservative states for a businesslike approach to immigration, but in 2014 a high number of Republicans ran for election vowing to cancel a law subsidizing college tuition fees to students residents in the state, regardless of their legal status (Rennie, 2015).

To transform the Latino/a educational inequity into an opportunity for national educational gain it is important that states are invested in funding higher education and understand how postsecondary institutional practices and policies positively and negatively shape Latino/a college students’ outcomes (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Contreras 2011; Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012; Nuñez; 2014; Solorzano et al., 2005). Despite, the educational attainment and socioeconomic challenges, many more Latinos/as
are enrolling in college and still more would seek degrees if legislators looked to the long term and changed state laws that make the children of undocumented immigrants pay much more than their American classmates for a public college education (Rennie, 2015).

**Latino/a Education in Missouri**

Missouri ranks 27th nationally in undergraduate enrollment for Latinos/as with 4% of Latinos/as enrolled in college (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). Recent data also show that in Missouri there was a 26% increase in Latino/a undergraduate degree conferring of Latinos/as from 2008-2009 to 2012-2013 (Immigration Policy Center, 2015). Despite the recent increase in undergraduate enrollment and degree completion, the University of Missouri, which is the location where this study occurs, lags behind the state and national averages with 3% of Latino/a student enrollment.

**White Collar/Blue Collar Dichotomy in U.S. Higher Education**

The “white collar” and “blue collar” terminologies have historically been used as occupational classifications that distinguish workers who perform manual labor from those performing professional jobs (Scott, n.d.). While blue collar workers wear uniforms, usually blue, and work in trade occupations, white collar workers typically wear white, button down shirts and work in office settings (Scott, n.d.). Other aspects that typically distinguish blue-collar and white collar workers include educational attainment and personal income (Scott, n.d.). In today’s capitalist neo-liberal economy many blue collar employers hire unskilled and low-skilled workers to perform simple tasks such as cleaning, maintenance and assembly line work (Scott, n.d.).

The social and economic status of blue collar workers in the U.S. has historically been associated with issues economic insecurity and alienation affecting White and minority groups
alike (U.S. Department of Labor, 1970). Since the 1970s, stable blue-collar employment has rapidly disappeared, bringing severe financial challenges to American families (Silva, 2013). Ironically, the U.S. economy is now dominated by so-called white-collar positions where most of the American middle-class population is employed (Saval, 2014). The dominance of white-collar positions in the American economy has been marked by continuous layoffs, stress, job insecurity, and wage stagnation (Saval, 2014).

Higher education has not been immune to the challenges of the unstable economic environment, which has affected faculty, staff, and students at different levels (Saval, 2014; Schultz, 2012; Silva 2013). Drawing upon his working-class roots and experiences as a first-generation college student and professor, Schultz argues that the creation of a market-driven corporate university and class biases is compromising the goal of education, which is “to provide a diversity of perspectives and voices in the search for truth” (p. 67). Schultz adds that the academy has been trapped by a market-driven curriculum and subdued to the demands of socioeconomic class.

Saval (2014) also notes that in universities the phrase “academic labor” has recently become a good example for declining job protection for university faculty and staff. White-collar university workers report experiencing higher levels of stress and many long hours of work without overtime pay (Saval, 2014). It is within this complex market-driven economy that students belonging to the American working-class have come to see their relationship with college become a broken social contract (Silva, 2013). These working-class students have to face the fact that they do not have the tools and resources to succeed in college (Silva, 2013). Unlike their parents and grandparents who followed a well-structured “path from school to the assembly line” and later “marriage and children”, these students spend more time in school,
change jobs more frequently, and start families later (Silva, 2013, p. 2). It is within this unstable economy and white collar, blue collar dichotomy that Latino/a faculty, staff, and students are expected to thrive in higher education.

The Latino/a Workforce and the Educational Disconnect

As is true for all racial and ethnic groups, the link between greater educational attainment and improved employment outcomes remains strong (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Educational attainment is a key factor that explains why Latino/a labor force outcomes lag behind those of their White counterparts. Unemployment rates for Latinos/as also vary depending on where they live, their education level, and whether they are foreign born or native (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). The unemployment rate for Latinos/as averaged 11.5% in 2011, compared to 7.9% for Whites (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Latino/a unemployment is tied in part because Latinos/as are overrepresented in industries such as construction and manufacturing, both of which lost the most jobs during the recession, and that they are underrepresented in sectors that experienced job growth during the recession- education and health services (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012).

Latinos/as in the labor force have lower levels of degree attainment compared to other groups and are heavily concentrated in certain industries and sectors (Cardernas & Kerby, 2012; Santiago et al., 2015). In 2013, 71% of Latinos/as (25 years and older) in the labor force had at least a high school diploma, compared to over 90% of Whites, African Americans, and Asians who had completed high school (Santiago et al., 2015). Of those in the labor force, only 18% of Latinos/as earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to Asians (59%), Whites (37%), and African Americans (27%) (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). To help Latinos/as overcome the blue collar ceiling, education must be recognized as the primary
means to strengthen human capital (Santiago et al., 2015). A study led by DePaul University as part of the New Journalism on Latino Children project explains that if the emerging Latino population grows up without attaining more education and job skills than their parents, they will either remain caught in the same low-paying jobs as the previous generation or miss out on employment altogether, as jobs in manufacturing and other industries continue to disappear.

Although Latino/a workers have seen improvement in employment and wages, Latino/a workers continue to be disproportionately affected by the weak economic recovery and lower educational attainment (Nevarez, 2013). Latinos/as have been equally distributed in a variety of blue collar occupations including construction, service and agriculture, but many continue to struggle to pursue careers in academia, medicine, management and other influential professional positions (BLS, 2010). For instance, the workforce demographics in the mid-western city of Chicago, Illinois, illustrate the blue collar ceiling that Latinos/as are hitting in seeking professional careers. Latinos/as were three of every five new entrants to the region’s labor force over the past decade (Fuller & McElmurry, 2011). Most of these Latinos/as have roots in Chicago, but many remain poorly educated. The younger generations of Latinos/as in Chicago are constrained to hit this blue collar ceiling (e.g., low-paying, semi-skilled jobs at best), entering the workforce with neither the professional and technical skills necessary to increase the local economy’s productivity (Fuller & McElmurry, 2011).

Smith (2010) also illustrates the difficulty that lack of education and professional training brings to Latino/as during the employment application process. Because a relatively high percentage of low-income Latinos/as are undocumented non-English speaking immigrants, they have a greater need for personal contacts to act as personal intermediaries to get potential employers to consider them seriously for employment (Dohan 2003; Smith 2010). It is with this
complex disconnect between Latino/a education and workforce demands that educators and business leaders should increasingly strive to prepare the young Latino/a workforce as tomorrow’s workers (Carter, 2013; Meinert, 2013).

When one in four children in public schools is Latino/a, economic self-interest alone should stimulate states to train Latinos/as for the 21st century (Rennie, 2015). Inevitably, by 2035 these U.S.-born youth will comprise a significant proportion of a majority-minority workforce (Fuller & McElmurry, 2011). The decline in the blue collar job market also makes it critical to train blue collar employees and invest in their professional growth (Carter, 2013; Fuller & McElmurry, 2011). However, an analysis of the past decade reveals that a full 40% of U.S.-born workers are largely unable to advance through the blue collar ceiling which also limits their foreign-born counterparts (Carter 2013; Fuller & McElmurry, 2011). In summary, if current trends continue, too many U.S.-born Latino/a youth will have difficulty finding job opportunities and will be confined to blue collar work in the same industries as their immigrant parents (Fuller & McElmurry, 2011).

**Latino/a Critical Theory (LatCrit) in Higher Education Research**

LatCrit is an infant discourse that originated from legal scholarship during the late 1980s and early 1990s as part of colloquiums on the implications of Critical Race Theory (CRT) for Latinas/os (Valdes, n.d). LatCrit has historically found intellectual inspiration from critical movements such as Critical Race Theory, Critical Legal Studies, American civil rights scholarship, Continental Social and Political Philosophy, Feminist Studies, and Marxism, which all share an overarching concern for empowering human beings to overcome the limitations placed on them by race, class, and gender (Fay, 1987; Ladson-Billings 2009; Litowitz, 1996; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Francisco Valdes, Daniel Solorzano, Dolores Delgado Bernal, and
Octavio Villalpando are amongst scholars that have shaped the direction of this young theory (Delgado Bernal 2002; Valdes, 1998).

Considered a branch or close cousin of CRT, LatCrit is an interdisciplinary race-based interpretive theoretical framework and methodological tool that provides scholars with a lens that consciously addresses the oppression of marginalized populations across their intersecting identities in American society and rectifies the shortcomings of existing social and legal conditions (Fernandez, 2002; Flores & Garcia, 2009; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solorzano & Bernal, 2002; Valdes, 1998). LatCrit brings a rich and contextualized, analysis of the cultural, political, and economic dimensions of White supremacy as it affects Latinas/os in their individual and collective struggles for self-understanding and social justice (Iglesias, 1997; Iglesias & Valdes, 1998).

LatCrit offers epistemological, methodological, and theoretical contributions to educational research but has not yet been adopted as widely as CRT in the educational field (Decuir & Dixson 2004; Fernandez, 2002). Education scholars have increasingly begun to use CRT and LatCrit in their qualitative research, and today many education scholars consider themselves critical race theorists who use CRT and LatCrit’s ideas to understand different issues of college access, academic persistence, the achievement gap, and faculty hiring, tenure, and promotion, among other key issues in higher education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Fernandez, 2002; Lopez, 2003).

Although LatCrit serves a key role in unveiling social inequities that exist within the structure of higher education against Latinos/as, I did not choose this theory for my study because many in the academy still approach LatCrit with apprehension (Hiraldo, 2010). LatCrit critics argue that critical theoretical frameworks such as LatCrit are problematic
because they do not clearly account for personal responsibility and free choice and their role in inferior social standing and inequality of access to resources (Litowitz, 1996; Subotnik, 1998). For instance, if an institution does not provide explicit racial preferences, it will be considered as an institution that disempowers the marginalized based on race (Bennett, 2012, Subotnik, 1998). The practice of intellectual narcissism is another critique often directed toward CRT and LatCrit research (Litowitz, 1996). This narcissism is observed when CRT and LatCrit scholars are careless about their research design and write about their own personal experiences of marginalization (i.e., Black, Latino, Asian, etc.) in such a way that their personal accounts overshadow the voice of their participants (Litowitz, 1996; Valdes 1998). When not done well, the danger of narcissism can make CRT and LatCrit indeed perpetuate the idea that minorities are specially gifted with story-telling abilities but lack analytical skills (Litowitz, 1996). The latter part of this chapter includes the argument on why an intersectionality framework is a better fit for my study.

**Latinos/as and the Effect of Affirmative Action**

Affirmative action was created by U.S. President John F. Kennedy to improve employment opportunities of marginalized groups in the workforce (Taylor-Carter et al., 1995). Although affirmative action has opened the doors of academia for many Latinos/as, there is much work yet to be done to help Latinos/as navigate unwelcoming institutional environments (Johnson, 1997). Ignoring discrimination in the recruitment and retention of Latino/a faculty and staff diminishes the richness and diversity of contributions made by Latinos/as in research, teaching, campus leadership, and community service (Delgado-Romero et al., 2007).

Learning from Latinos/as’ experiences of migration, prejudice, and traditions, the culture of higher education can become a robust source of acceptance and knowledge transfer (De Luca
It is imperative that universities implement culturally sensitive policies in the recruitment and retention of Latino/a faculty and staff (Delgado-Romero et al., 2007).

Challenges involved in serving Latinos/as cannot be overcome without supportive structures such as mentor figures or support centers to promote best practices and a cultural commitment to Latinos/as (Torres & Zerquera, 2012). Efforts to hire and retain Latino/a faculty are likely to fail without clear understanding by all involved as to what dimensions of Latino/a faculty and staff are desirable within a given institutional context (Delgado-Romero et al., 2007). The future will depend greatly on the role of university top leaders in effectively implementing and transforming affirmative action (Lipson, 2009).

**Gender Issues: The Latino/a Experience in Higher Education**

Public discussion of gender gaps in higher education is often received with skepticism or reframed as traditional gender dynamics within education (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Thus, it is not surprising that most published research on gender dynamics has come from the workplace rather than academia (Rudolph et al., 2015). This section identifies examples of how gender dynamics affect the experiences of Latinos/as in higher education. There continues to be a growing body of literature on the experiences of Latino/a students in higher education, which includes research studies around access, identity, engagement, and sense of belonging (Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2006; Perez & McDonough, 2008; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). In the past 20 years, more than 300 authors have also addressed the status and experience of faculty of color in academe with a continued rise in publications addressing the issue of the low representation of faculty of color (Turner, Sotello, Gonzales, & Wood, 2008). The discussions of this section are primarily based on the experience of Latino/a faculty and students as there is a severe literature
gap on the experiences of Latino/a staff in higher education, let alone Latinos/as working in non-academic positions.

**Latino faculty in higher education.** To better prepare students for an increasingly diverse society, campuses across the country remain engaged in efforts to diversify the racial and ethnic makeup of their faculties. However, Latinos are significantly underrepresented as faculty and staff in higher education (Santiago et al., 2015; Turner et al., 2008). In 2011, Latinos represented just 4% of faculty (instruction and research), compared to Whites (74%), African Americans (7%), and Asians (6%) (Santiago et al., 2015). Latino faculty representation is low in all faculty ranks with Latinos representing 3% of full professors, 4% of associate professors, 4% of assistant professors, 5% of lecturers, and 6% of instructors (Santiago et al., 2015). The majority of Latino faculty are not full-time faculty with 52% of Latino faculty employed part-time in 2011 (Santiago et al., 2015).

De Luca and Escoto (2012) attempt to get at the core of Latino/a underrepresentation in academia and argue that this Latino/a underrepresentation is a systematic exclusion and discrimination by a powerful majority. White professors remain dominant in many departments holding powerful positions such as full professor, department chair, or dean (Delgado-Romero, Manlove, Manlove, & Hernandez, 2007). Additionally, decisions for tenure and promotion typically do not consider that lower student evaluation rates of underrepresented faculty have been attributed to levels of prejudice among students and communication patterns differences across cultures (Helms et al., 2003).

Qualitative research significantly contributes to ensure that the voices of Latino faculty and staff are heard and understood. The use of counter-stories or testimonios in analyzing higher education’s climate provides Latino/a faculty, staff, and students a voice to tell their narratives...
involving marginalized experiences (Hiraldo, 2010). Latino/a faculty and professional staff may face challenges networking and marketing themselves as formidable colleagues due to perceptions they are affirmative action hires and prejudice (Verdugo, 2003). Discrimination, low number of Latino/a faculty and staff, marginalization, “tokenization,” and the lack of status and power of Latino/a faculty and staff in higher education are barriers for the success of those Latinos/as who are able to become professors or administrators (Verdugo, 2003). These experiences lead highly educated Latinos/as into careers that validate and appreciate their work (De Luca & Escoto, 2012).

**Latina faculty in academia.** There is a growing body of literature describing how gender discrimination and employment bias hinders the promotion of women to high-level positions in academia, including presidents, deans, and tenure track full professorships (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). However, there is little research specifically tracking the progress made by Latina, Black and Asian women faculty (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). In her study of Latina doctoral students, Gonzales (2006) describes that challenges begin when Latinas are graduates students. This daunting prospect appears to continue after Latinas graduate and enter the workforce as junior faculty (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014).

Oppressive work environments and institutional barriers make it rather difficult for Latinas to succeed in academia (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014). For instance, Latina faculty face dual prejudice as females and as members of a minority group (Young & Wright, 2001). Latinos are more likely to hold higher ranking positions than Latinas in academia and women continue to obtain tenure in lower proportion than men in comparable fields and this process has not evolved to modern faculty expectations (Nunez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012;
Santiago et al., 2015; Young & Wright, 2001). There are more/a Latino full professors than Latinas: 68% of Latino faculty while 32% of Latina faculty in 2011 (Santiago et al., 2015). Only 4% of tenured or tenure-track females in the U.S. are Latina and only 3% of female full professors are Latina (Nunez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012).

Latinos were slightly more likely to be faculty but significantly less likely to work in administrative positions than Latinas (Santiago et al., 2015). On one hand, in 2011, Latinos represented the majority (51%) of Latino faculty (instruction and research) and represented 41% of Latinos in executive, administrative, and managerial positions (Santiago et al., 2015). On the other hand, Latinas were more likely to be lecturers and instructors than Latino males: 55% of all Latino lecturers and instructors were female, while 45% were male in 2011 (Santiago et al., 2015).

Family is a strong component of the Latino/a culture, and family values may pose barriers for Latinas as most pursue tenure and promotions during their childbearing years (Young & Wright, 2001). On the basis of their dual minority statuses as being women and Latina, Latinas encounter ethnic prejudice and sexism (Young & Wright 2001; De Luca & Escoto, 2012). Female professors face difficult challenges of the tenure process and accommodate their academic career to fulfill their family and cultural expectations (De Luca & Escoto, 2012; Ponjuan, 2011).

Gender racism or racist sexism is a unique form of oppression experienced by women of color due to their position at the intersection of race and gender (Collins, 2007; Pittman, 2010). Thus, the small number of women faculty recruited, retained, or promoted in higher education reflect the cumulative and systematic effects of gender and race oppression (Collins, 2007; Pittman, 2010). Precisely, Pittman (2010) is among the few scholars that studies the classroom
experiences of women faculty of color despite the disproportionate amount of time they spend teaching. Studies also show that Latina faculty describe gendered racism in their classroom interactions with students even when they have authority as professors (Allen et al., 2002; Pittman, 2010). Specifically, they depict White male students as challenging their authority, teaching competency, and scholarly expertise, as well as offering subtle and not so subtle threats to their persons and their careers (Pittman, 2010). Pittman’s (2010) research shows that faculty from underrepresented groups could be equally vulnerable to classroom oppression and that such oppression could undermine the faculty teaching effectiveness and emotional well-being.

Ironically, Latina faculty simultaneously experience their classroom with powerful institutional statuses and powerless societal statuses (Pittman, 2010). This is indeed problematic for learning outcomes and faculty retention because research shows that institutional faculty diversity increases positive learning outcomes for all students (Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003; Ponjuan, 2011; Terenzini et al., 2001). Similarly to the experiences of Latina faculty in the classroom, there is an alarming lack of research on the work experiences of Latina non-academic employees in higher education. Thus, my study fills a research gap by focusing on the narratives of Latinos and Latinas workplace dynamics and by giving voice to the stories of Latino/a non-academic employees.

**Gender issues in Latino/a college enrollment.** Maria Estela Zarate and Ronald Gallimore (2005) identify factors that predicted college enrollment for Latino and Latina students. On one hand, for Latinos, academic achievement (as measured by standardized tests), parental factors, and language proficiency consistently predicted their college enrollment. On the other hand, for Latinas, teacher-rated classroom performance and pursuit of college counseling in high school were consistently significant predictors for college enrollment. While
Zarate and Gallimore (2005) quantitative analyses exposed gender differences in factors that led to college enrollment, the authors conclude that future research should use a qualitative approach to explore how and why gender differences exist.

**The vanishing Latino male in higher education.** Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) alert us of the vanishing of Latino males from the American higher education pipeline. The number of Latinas/os attending college has actually increased steadily over the past few decades, yet the proportional representation of Latinos continue to slide relative to their Latinas counterparts (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006). This trend has been especially evident in secondary and postsecondary education in recent years, as Latinos are more likely to drop out of high school to join the workplace rather than attend college, and to leave college before graduating (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). There are economic and social consequences of the Latino educational dropout crisis. From an economic perspective, the gender gap in educational attainment could manifest itself in a reduction of the skilled labor force as well as a decrease in labor productivity (Saenz & Ponjuna, 2009). Given the ongoing demographic shifts that point out to a younger, more Latino/a labor supply, this population represents the fastest growing employment pool yet the most underutilized talent pool (Saenz & Ponjuna, 2009). The human capital capacity and global competitiveness of the U.S. will be increasingly dependent on this growing segment of the population (Maldonado & Farmer, 2006).

**Gender dynamics in Latino/a graduate students.** Mentoring in academic contexts is a ubiquitous and powerful development process, yet there is very limited literature on academic mentoring of Latino/a graduate students that investigates potential gender differences (Rudolph et al., 2015). A disproportionate number of Latino/a students pursue graduate degrees (much less than any other group) and studies of academic mentoring with Latino males are lacking
Furthermore, mentoring studies in academia mostly focus on undergraduate surveys that usually do not include significant numbers of Latino/a students (Rudolph et al., 2015). Through their study on graduate student mentoring, Rudolph et al. (2015) describe how gender roles influence academic mentoring for Latinos and Latinas. Both male and female students identified similar barriers such as social inequality, financial insecurity, and lack of role models for advanced degrees in the family (Rudolph et al., 2015). While both male and female students valued the positive influence of mentoring in their careers, the number of female students connected with a mentor was much higher than the number of male students. The “provider” work role for men where they are expected to work for the family stood out as more impeding of mentoring for males than the gender role of family caregiver for females (Rudolph et al., 2015).

**Theoretical Framework**

Intersectionality is the theoretical framework used in the analysis of this study. This section presents and synthesis of intersectionality literature addressing Latino/a issues within higher education.

**Origins of Intersectionality**

The concept of intersectionality originated from Critical Race Feminist legal scholarship and the humanities to address how social identities such as gender, race, class, citizenship, sexuality, religion, and other dimensions of difference simultaneously influence life opportunities, educational experiences, and educational outcomes of historically marginalized populations within systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 2008; Nuñez, 2014; Syed 2010). Collins (1990, 2007) advanced the scope of intersectionality to recognize that individuals could simultaneously hold marginalized and privileged identities (Nuñez, 2014). Thus,
marginalization and privilege can be significant in experiencing contexts and systems of interlocking power and oppression, such as institutionalized racism and sexism (Nuñez, 2014). Revealing at least 14 social identity categories including race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, national belonging, religion, language, phenotype, and able-bodiedness, to date, intersectionality has become a paradigm for theory and research offering new ways of understanding complex social phenomena such as how identities intersect simultaneously and are independent (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2012; Harper, 2011; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Lutz, 2002, as cited in Davis, 2008, p. 81; Syed 2010). This is precisely what makes intersectionality research so complex: when the research topic expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis (McCall, 2005).

Best known for her ideas of intersectionality and the matrix of domination, Collins (2000) traces back the origins of intersectionality to the Black feminist movement and defines intersectionality as a particular perspective for understanding social location in terms of intersect systems of oppression. Specifically, intersectionality is an analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women’s experience and in turn, are shaped by Black Women (Collins, 2000). Borrowing ideas from Weber and Foucault, Collins (2000) used the term matrix of domination referring to the overall organization of power in a society. Collins (2000) also warned that despite the widespread belief that intersectionality has “arrived,” it is important to recognize that this worldview constitutes a new era of inquiry that is still in its infancy (Carastathis, 2014). If intersectionality is to have a promising future in feminist scholarship, its intellectual history must be engaged with rigor, integrity, and attentive-ness to the theoretical and political aims which originally animated it (Carastathis, 2014; Collins, 2000).
Intersectionality has become a lens applied in research to understand how power relations shape life opportunity according to multiple social identities in a wide range of disciplines (Nuñez, 2014). Anthias (2013), Bonilla-Silva (2012) and feminist studies Cho et al. (2013) and Davis (2008) have argued that intersectionality is not yet a theory. In mapping out the state of intersectionality studies about two decades after the emergence of the intersectionality perspective (Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991; Cho et al., 2013), Nuñez (2014) asserts that intersectionality is best framed as an “analytic sensibility” to explore.

**Intersectionality: Development of Conceptual and Empirical Work**

Before higher education scholars began to formally use the terminology of intersectionality in research, they were already considering the role of multiple identities with relationships to various social contexts and interlocking systems of power, privilege, and oppression in shaping higher educational experiences and outcomes (Nuñez, 2014). For example, in student development theory, Jones and McEwen’s (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity theory (MMDI) aligns closely with the intersectional perspective (Nuñez, 2014).

At least three theories have considered the role of situated social contexts in constraining or enhancing college access and success resembling intersectionality attributes (Nuñez, 2014). Renn and Arnold’s (2003) ecological theory of student development emphasizes the role of embedded social micro-, meso, and macro-level contexts, including organizational and external subcultures, in shaping the nature and salience of social identities in college students’ lives. Similarly, Perna (2006) and Perna and Thomas (2008) model of college access and success articulates how situated layers of context (including the family, K-12 school, local higher education systems, state policies, and economic conditions) influence students’ perspectives of,
enrollment, experiences, and completion of college (Nuñez, 2014). Neither of these models used intersectionality as a guiding lens, but they pointed to the critical role of multiple social and contextual identities and related institutional dynamics to influence college access and success (Nuñez, 2014). Finally, Hurtado et al. (2012) diverse learning environment (DLE) model of campus climate is another illustration of a theory that considers situated social contexts in affecting the college experience (Nuñez, 2014).

Similar to the conceptual development described above, some earlier research did not necessarily use the term intersectionality as an empirical lens, but actually used an intersectionality perspective by addressing the experiences of individuals and groups in higher education (Nuñez, 2014). For example, in their studies of female faculty and graduate students of color, Cuadraz and Pierce (1994) and Turner (2002) considered the role of multiple identities and institutional systems such as racism and sexism in affecting higher education experiences (Nuñez, 2014). Specifically, these scholars argued that the effects of multiple marginal identities of being women and people of color affected graduate students and faculty academic life in unique and simultaneous ways, limiting their capabilities to realize their goals in some ways, but in other ways offering them a source of resilience (Nuñez, 2014).

More recent work has explicitly used intersectionality as a conceptual lens in empirical studies to examine how having multiple social identities shapes faculty and students’ experiences with power, privilege, and oppression in higher education settings (Nuñez, 2014). For instance, Jones (2009) employed intersectionality as a theory to explore how multiple identity dimensions shape the way faculty and students navigate privileged and marginalized identities. Jones et al. (2012) and Abes (2012) extended this work further by using autoethnographic techniques to illuminate the dynamic interaction of abstract and understudied categories such as class,
sexuality, gender, and race across different social contexts to shape students and faculty college experiences. Similarly, on their qualitative study of African American faculty’s different experiences based in gender, Griffin and Reddick (2011) found that female faculty perceived that they were more likely to be expected to mentor and take care of students, while men were cautious about associating with students for fear of accusations of taking advantage of these students (Nuñez, 2014). As this section traced highlights of the development of intersectionality conceptually, one can notice the research gap of intersectionality conceptual and empirical studies on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic labor in higher education.

**What is Intersectionality?**

Intersectionality research, intersectionality framework, or intersectionality analysis refers to the utilization of intersectionality to approach and conduct empirical social science research (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Specifically, intersectionality is the process through which multiple social identities (e.g., race, gender, class) converge and ultimately shape individual and group experiences (McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008; Syed 2010). Intersectionality is an important research method and analytical tool that highlights the complexities of oppression while addressing the limitations of one-dimensional analyses of the understanding of groups and individuals in higher education (Museus & Griffin, 2011; Nuñez, 2014; Syed, 2010). Intersectionality also aims to identify institutional and societal power dynamics that “perpetuate marginalization and to advance strategies to challenge and diminish this marginalization” (Dill & Zambrana, 2009, p. 5). In practical terms, intersectionality helps researchers gain a richer and more nuanced understanding of their research contexts and participants’ experiences (Museus & Griffin, 2011; Syed, 2010).

According to Dill and Zambrana (2009), intersectionality has four main analytical tasks:
1. Place the lived experiences and struggles of people of color and other marginalized groups as a starting point for the development of theory

2. Explore the complexities not only of individual identities but also group identity, recognizing that variations within groups are often ignored and essentialized.

3. Unveil the ways interconnected domains of power organize and structure inequality and oppression

4. Promote social justice and social change by linking research and practice to create a holistic approach to the eradication of disparities and to changing social and higher education institutions (p. 5)

As described by Dill and Zambrana (2009), the tenets of intersectionality are a good fit to analyze the work experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU because these employees are underrepresented at predominantly and historically White work environment. The use of intersectionality in this study will also help identify any power dynamics and structures of oppression for Latinos/as working in non-academic positions at MU.

**Limitations of Intersectionality**

In assessing how intersectionality has been developed and applied within the past 2 decades, some scholars argue that across multiple disciplines, the application of intersectionality has tended to focus on the analysis of how individuals experience multiple social identities, rather than specifying institutional structures and power dynamics that circumscribe or enhance life opportunities for those holding those identities (Anthias 2013; Bonilla-Silva 2013; Cho et al., 2013, Collins, 2007, 2009; Nuñez, 2014). Put differently, an intersectionality lens tended to focus on who people are and how people experience social inequality rather than the way social inequality is perpetuated (Chun et al., 2013). Not understanding how power inequalities are
perpetuated makes achieving Dill and Zambrana’s (2009) fourth task of advancing social change much more difficult (Nuñez, 2014).

Some have critiqued intersectionality for being more of a “buzzword” than a tangible research tool in need of greater analytical precision (Davis 2008; Nuñez, 2014). Sociologists Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2013) and Floya Anthias (2013) have argued that the concept of intersectionality is promising in understanding issues like racial/ethnic equity in life outcomes but that it is still a “first generation” concept requiring further development and greater specification to increase its utility in social science research (Nuñez, 2014).

**Intersectionality: Research Application**

Intersectionality is applied to study not only how social identities, including gender, race, class, citizenship, sexuality, religion, and other dimensions of difference simultaneously influence educational experiences and outcomes, but it should also be used to study the broader social dynamics and systems of oppression that create inequality for individuals on the basis of their multiple identities (Nuñez, 2014). When focusing solely on the individual level of identity, however, it becomes all too easy to assign educational inequities to perceived characteristics and inabilities of marginalized individuals or groups, rather than to the economic, social, and political insidious practices that perpetuate these inequities (Nuñez, 2014; Zuberi, 2001).

Intersectionality suggests that the confluence of one’s multiple marginalized and privileged identities is an interaction that creates a unique experience, distinctive from those with whom they may share some identities but not to others (Choo and Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991). For example, a gay Latino faculty member is not more or less oppressed than his heterosexual Latino or gay white male counterparts; his experiences are uniquely shaped by his multiple identities and are distinct from those of his counterparts (Museus & Griffin, 2011).
With its focus on multiple social constructed identities, the intersectionality framework has also been used to explore variations in educational experiences according to gender among minority groups such as Latino/a students, African American faculty, and Filipino American college students (Nuñez, 2014). Typical scholarship employing intersectionality in education and the social sciences has focused on how individuals experience privilege, marginalization, or both, according to various combinations of social categories (e.g., Anthias, 2013; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Cho et al., 2013; Nuñez, 2014). Accordingly, one advantage of intersectionality is that it can be applied in a flexible manner to study how an array of social identities and associated power dynamics shape individuals’ life chances (Davis, 2008).

**Intersectionality in Higher Education Research**

Intersectionality has been useful in higher education empirical research to guide the examination of the role of multiple identities and associated systems of power, privilege, and oppression in the experiences of higher education members (Renn & Reason, 2013). Intersectionality has the potential as analytical tool to transform higher education into a social hub that offers individuals, particularly those from historically marginalized backgrounds, more equitable chances for economic and social mobility, in a society that has historically been characterized by significant social inequality (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Hurtado et al., 2012; Jones, 2009; Renn & Reason, 2013; Smith, 2009). Accordingly, higher education scholars have recently turned to intersectionality as a lens to explore how multiple social identities across different institutional contexts with interlocking systems of power, privilege, and domination shape educational processes, outcomes, and opportunities for marginalized groups (Nuñez, 2014).
Intersectionality analyses can serve a critical tool in addressing higher education blind spots in issues of power and inequality and also has implications for policy, practice and individual lives in higher education (Harper 2011; Museus & Griffin, 2011). Specifically, intersectional analyses can advance higher education research in four ways. First of all, intersectionality frameworks more accurately reflect diversity in higher education (Museus & Griffin, 2011). For example, socioeconomic origins, gender, and race can have profound influences on the experiences of underrepresented university staff (Museus & Griffin, 2011). If higher education researchers are to maximize understanding of Latino/a non-academic employees, they must explore the experiences of groups situated at the intersections of various social identities and groupings (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Secondly, intersectional analyses enable the excavation of voices and realities at the margins (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Overreliance on one-dimensional categories, even though giving space to the voices of racial minorities and women in higher education, fails to establish adequate space for individuals who are part of subgroups, at the margins of multiple groups (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Scholars such as Cooper, Ortiz, Benham, and Sherr (2002); Cho (2003), Harper (2007, 2011), Museus and Kiang (2009), Museus and Griffin (2011) and Teranishi (2010) have begun to explore the identities and experiences of individuals who belong to subgroups. Thus, intersectional analyses can serve as a critical tool for understanding how identifying with multiple marginalized or underserved populations uniquely shape experiences and realities among individuals and groups in higher education (Museus & Griffin, 2011).

Thirdly, intersectionality promotes a greater understanding on how intersecting identities contribute to inequality (Museus & Griffin, 2011). The failure of higher education scholarship to make the intersections of social identities and groups more central in research and discourse
restricts the existing level of understanding of and progress in addressing equity and diversity issues in higher education (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Thus, intersectional analyses can enable higher education researchers to make wiser decisions about where to invest their energy and resources (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Lastly, intersectionality combats simultaneous advancement and perpetuation of inequality and oppression (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Ironically, when scholars rely merely on one-dimensional classifications, even their efforts to address inequities in higher education can actually perpetuate assumptions that actually contribute to other inequalities (Museus, 2009).

Despite transformative potential of intersectionality in higher education scholarship, its emphasis on higher education is still limited. As discussed above, greater emphasis on employing intersectional frameworks can contribute to important advancements in the field (Museus & Griffin, 2011). For instance, intersectionality helps higher education researchers understand that if they are to maximize understanding of their faculty, staff, and, students, they must explore the experiences of these groups situated at the intersections of various social identities and groupings (Museus & Griffin, 2011). However, one of the challenges of using intersectionality in higher education research is how institutional researchers can accurately capture, measure, and assess individuals’ intersecting identities (Bowleg, 2008; Harper, 2011; Stewart, 2010).

While intersectionality work in higher education has emphasized the role of the social contexts in contributing to educational conditions, the application of intersectionality to empirical studies has largely been limited to descriptions of these actors’ experiences, rather than institutional dynamics among social actors or other entities that shape those experiences (Nuñez, 2014). For example, more is known about the variation among Latinos in college access and
success according to multiple social identities, but it is less clear what specific institutional norms, beliefs, attitudes or behaviors related to these identities contribute to lower Latino college completion rates (Nuñez, 2014). Therefore, the potential of intersectionality to illuminate systems and structures of domination and power is not fully harnessed (Cho et al., 2013; Dill & Zambrana 2009; Nuñez, 2014; Renn & Reason 2013).

I think it is problematic when diversity, social justice, and inclusion in colleges and universities in the U.S. are defined from a top down approach by White male administrators. Thus, to go beyond what Bonilla-Silva (2013) has termed the “first generation” of intersectionality scholarship, scholars in feminist studies (Cho et al., 2013) and sociology (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Collins, 2007, 2009) have called for intersectionality scholarship to focus less on the “additive” (Collins, 2007) descriptions of how individuals experience holding multiple social identities and to focus more on the constitutive dynamics of power in institutions that perpetuate social reproduction of inequalities (Anthias, 2013; Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 2007, 2009; Nuñez, 2014). Intersectionality still needs to become a conceptual lens for examining meso- and macro-, as well as micro-level instantiations of privilege and marginalization in higher education (Nuñez, 2014). Examining how power relations are created and reified can take intersectionality beyond a static location where categories meet toward actualizing intersectionality’s potential to identify and challenge dynamics that perpetuate educational inequities (Anthias, 2013).

Hurtado et al. (2012) have encouraged higher education scholars to consider more extensively the role of meso-level and macro-level contexts, such as state higher education policies or public attitudes about these policies, in affecting college access and success (Nuñez, 2014). In particular, Hurtado et al. (2012) noted that scholarship is still needed to also identify
how institutions produce inequality because this has potential to advance institutional transformation if it moves institutional actors towards reflexivity to alter their role in the reproduction of inequality (Hurtado et al., 2012, p. 105). Similarly, Smith (2009) argues that intersectionality can be useful in informing more equitable policy and practice through the insights it provides in understanding the general relationship between identity and diversity within higher education institutions. Identifying the workings of privilege and marginalization in organizations can enable institutional actors to challenge these workings and develop policies and programs to advocate for the inclusion and equitable advancement of diverse students, faculty, and staff (Smith, 2009).

Although the use of intersectionality in higher education research is still in early development stage, there are several scholars and studies that have contributed new knowledge to the field and should be highlighted. In one such study, Ramirez (2013) used qualitative methodology to explore Latinos and Latinas experiences in choosing a graduate school (Nuñez, 2014). Her findings included that Latinas were more likely to express that proximity to home and to their families of origin was important. Additionally, Latinos and Latinas were sometimes willing to sacrifice studying in elite graduate institutions if they felt that the environments in these institutions were unwelcoming (Nuñez, 2014). In another study, Nuñez and Murakami-Ramalho (2011) used intersectionality in their autoethnographic work as a lens to examine how their own mixed heritage Latina identities have shaped their research, teaching, and service as faculty members in a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Finally, Roscigno’s (2011) research on minority workers pointed out how company employees defend legal charges of racism and sexism inhibiting minoritized groups’ job advancement by rationalizing marginalized employees lack of advancement in terms of individual traits or shortcomings (Nuñez, 2014).
The use of the intersectionality framework is not exclusive to qualitative inquiry. For instance, Covarrubias (2011) actually created the term *critical quantitative intersectionality* and used it as a lens to observe differences in high school and postsecondary outcomes along multiple social identities including gender, class, ethnicity, and citizenship. Ruiz Alvarado and Hurtado have also used quantitative inquiry to examine how Latino/a students report the importance of their different social identities, including race/ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality, in different institutional contexts (Nuñez, 2014). The study findings demonstrated the varying degrees of significance of these identities for the students according to whether their universities had higher or lower proportions of Latinos, women or men, and lower socioeconomic status students (Nuñez, 2014).

The concept of power has been undertheorized in sociology (Bonilla-Silva 2013; Roscigno, 2011) and in higher education research (Pusser & Marginson 2012). The limited literature on power dynamics in higher education has made it difficult to visualize what terms like domains of power, matrices of domination, and systems of oppression mean when applying theoretical perspectives such as intersectionality (Nuñez, 2014). So far studies of higher education institutional power dynamics have addressed how power dynamics shape faculty and students opportunities, but more insights are needed to inform how power dynamics such as institutionalized racism or patriarchy shape the work experiences of Latino/a non-academic labor in higher education (Harper, 2012; Hart 2006; Nuñez, 2014).

Similar to other higher education intersectionality research, the research that has employed intersectionality to guide analysis of Latinos/as in higher education has primarily focused on students’ or faculty members’ perspectives on the role of multiple social identities and in some cases on systems of power and oppression in shaping their higher education.
experiences (Nuñez, 2014). Hence, my study on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic labor at a predominantly White institution such as the University of Missouri will serve as a literature foundation for qualitative intersectionality empirical studies focused on staff.

Why Intersectionality in this Study?

Although numerous theories could be used to understand the historical context and contemporary implications of the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU; an intersectionality framework is used in this narrative study because its multidimensional focus on power, identity, oppression, and marginalized populations makes it a suitable framework to deeply explore and critically examine the identity intersections and journeys of Latino/a non-academic employees in a PWI such as MU (Museus & Griffin, 2011; Shields, 2008; Syed 2010). Consistent with the narrative inquiry research method for this study, it is essential to capture the intersection and measures of identity for individuals’ lives because individuals and their sense of self are deeply integrated into public discourse, policies, and practices (Harper, 2011; Jones, 2009; Syed, 2010).

An individual’s sense of self can be based on many groups with which he or she identifies, or can also be simultaneously defined by their race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of their identity (Jones, 2009). It is then problematic that policies and expectations for Latino/a non-academic employees in higher education often times do not take into account the multiple identities that these workers bring to the university work environment. Accordingly, Kimbere Crenshaw (1991) discussed identity politics and asserted how they fail to capture the ways in which multiple social identities shape the lives of oppressed individuals. Since Crenshaw’s illumination of the significance of intersectionality perspectives for higher education research, scholars have argued that there is a unique experience at the intersection of
individuals’ identities, and efforts to isolate the influence of any social identity fails to capture how membership in multiple identity groups can affect how Latino/a non-academic employees are perceived, are treated, and experience college and university environments (Berger & Guidroz, 2009; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Shields 2008; Harper, 2011; Museus & Griffin, 2011; Syed 2010).

Latinos/as are not a monolithic population as we hold nuanced positions on a range of issues (Sanchez, 2014). I use intersectionality in my study because its analyses can move beyond more simplistic one-dimensional analyses to ensure that particular groups are not being excluded from discussions of equity in higher education (Museus & Griffin, 2011). Consistent with narrative inquiry, intersectionality also provides a more accurate, nuanced (Syed, 2010) and holistic view of my participants’ and their experiences (Harper, 2011; Museus & Griffin, 2011). For example, considering the multiple identities of my research participants during interviews will help me for the data gathering (questionnaire) and data analysis processes (discussion of findings) (Museus & Griffin, 2011).

Intersectionality has been used as lenses to examine intragroup inequality in life outcomes (Dill, McLaughlin, & Nieves, 2007; Nunez 2014; Zambrana & Dill, 2009). I was originally inclined to use Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) as the central framework of this study, but I ultimately decided to use an intersectionality because its emphasis goes beyond race and leaves more open to the researcher the choice of which social categories and associated forms of power and privilege to address (Dill & Zambrana 2009).

Intersectionality’s multidimensional lens and its focus on power dynamics, makes it a promising conceptual framework to address educational equity, especially among Latinos/as in the U.S. (Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Intersectionality is particularly suitable for framing the
understanding of diversity among Latinos/as because it recognizes that individuals can hold multiple social identities simultaneously (including both privileged and marginalized identities) and that these identities affect how they experience social, political, and economic contexts, including that of higher education (Collins 2007; Davis 2008; Smith 2009).

Despite the recognition of Latino/as as a distinct group by the Census and the subsequent documentation of their inequalities in life and educational opportunities education policy has continued to make more systematic educational inequality (Contreras, 2011; Nuñez, 2014). Intersectionality can help me unveil the relationship between my participants multiple identities related to power. For example, do Latino men feel more powerful when talking to fellow Latino men and less powerful when talking to White men?

**Bridging the Literature Gap**

This research synthesis has presented the limitations in higher education scholarship for identifying power dynamics in societal structures that perpetuate inequities (Nuñez, 2014). As Bonilla-Silva (2013) and Anthias (2013) suggest, higher education and other social sciences have not offered as much specific guidance on how researchers can identify, describe, and make visible the domains of power matrices of oppression, or interlocking systems domination that challenge educational equity in higher education (Collins, 1990; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Nuñez, 2014). This is partly because, as sociologist Roscigno (2011) argues, the concept of power is difficult to conceptualize and theorize, much less be applied to guide empirical work to identify specific power dynamics that reproduce social inequality (Nuñez, 2014). Collectively, this literature review demonstrates the importance of considering multiple social identities and associated systems of power and oppression in shaping the experiences of marginalized populations in higher education (Nuñez, 2014). Thus, there needs to be a broader research
agenda that will provide a roadmap for future work focused on more empirical studies on how power structures shape the work experiences of Latinos/as in higher education.

This literature review has also demonstrated the importance of intersectionality to inform the experiences of Latinos/as in higher education. As we reflect on the importance of intersectionality for higher education, it is also necessary to identify areas in need of urgent further development. More studies of intersectionality with a focus in higher education need to be done because discussions of institutional racism inherent in educational policy have historically been nonexistent and silent in many respects (Aleman, 2009; Lopez, 2003). Intersectionality has brought significant contributions to college access and campus climate experiences specifically centered in U.S. born Latino Chicana/o faculty and students, but this literature synthesis reveals that there is an alarming research gap to explore the intersectionality of experiences of Latinos/as working in administrative, professional, managerial, and service staff positions in academia. The new challenge for intersectionality is to generate new knowledge in issues of socioeconomic status and international immigration connected to higher education. Studies focusing predominantly on the career of White males in the workplace have dominated higher education research, and now more than ever the idea of proportional representation by Latino professors and staff in higher education is an idea whose time is finally here (Ortega-Liston & Rodriguez Soto, 2014).

Sociology research reveals that the experience of sex discrimination is reduced for both women and men when they are part of the numerical majority of their work group (Stainback, Ratliff, & Roscigno, 2011). Although supportive workplace cultures mitigate the likelihood of sex discrimination, relative power in the workplace does not seem to matter much (Stainback, Ratliff, & Roscigno, 2011). Research on race stratification and employment usually implies
discrimination as a key mechanism in race stratification, although few if any analyses bring attitudes, employee-employer interpretations and established discriminatory behavior into a singular analysis (Light, Roscigno, & Kalev, 2011). There needs to be more robust scholarship focus on power and gender dynamics in higher education if American higher education is to provide excellent education and access for all.

In narrowing the research gap identified in this study, it is important to note that there have been some attempts from communication scholars to study the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees in organizational contexts such as Wilfredo Alvarez (2011), and his dissertation on Communication Experiences of Latina and Latino Immigrant Custodial Workers Within a University Setting. Sandra Smith (2010) and her A Test of Sincerity: How Black and Latino Service Workers Make Decisions About Making Referrals study has also brought contributions to the understanding of cultural analysis and social capital mobilization in field of sociology. Gonzales et al. (2014) have also contributed to the field of rural sociology with multiple research projects focused on understanding the living and acculturation experiences of Latinos/as settled in the rural areas of the state of Missouri. Most recently, Gonzales et al. presented a new research project at the “2015 Cambio de Colores” conference with the goal of documenting the leadership influences on Latino/a producers that lead them to become involved in different programs within their communities The Cambio Center, a research center based out of MU’s College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (CAFNR) has also effectively build research data and literature on the experiences of Latino/as in rural areas of the state who work in farming and agriculture. Nevertheless, there is still a need for robust empirical studies on the living, working, and educational experiences of Latinos/as in non-rural areas of Missouri.
precisely, there is a need to understand the experiences of latino/as in missouri higher education system.

magolda (2016) has also contributed to the study of non-academic employees in higher education with his book the lives of campus custodians: insights into corporization and civic disengagement in the academy. while magolda’s study is not specifically focused on the latino/a non-academic population, this rich ethnography places campus custodians—an often invisible population of employees at the center of higher education research. through his study, magolda (2016) challenges higher education to change their negative stereotypes about campus custodian and to create ways to advance the education and professional development of these employees. magolda raises important critical questions for higher education such as: does the academy still believe wisdom is exclusive to particular professions or classes of people? are universities really inclusive? is addressing service workers’ concerns part of the mission of higher education? if universities profess to value education, why make it difficult for those on the margins, such as custodians, to “get educated?”

because of the limited higher education studies employing intersectionality as a lens to address latino/as staff issues in higher education, i also reviewed higher education research to understand more generally the role of multiple social identities and institutional contexts in shaping college access and success for latino/as students (nuñez, 2014). in addition, while the focus of this research synthesis was latino/as non-academic labor in higher education, i expanded my search to include studies of faculty and students, to gain a better sense of how scholars in higher education have employed intersectionality to explore dynamics of privilege and oppression in shaping inclusion or exclusion of different higher education stakeholders (nuñez, 2014). when i expanded my search, i found that, similar to my preliminary findings
regarding Latino/a non-academic labor, there was more empirical literature that focused on the individual experiences and multiple social identities of students and faculty. I also noticed a lack of research on how actors in higher education institution themselves perpetuate dynamics of privilege or oppression (Nuñez, 2014). I believe that more rigorous research with different methodologies and methods of inquiry is needed on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees as my study is limited to the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at only one mid-western PWI. It is my hope that this literature review can serve as a reference point to further advance future research on Latino/a non-academic labor in higher education.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design of this study including discussions on the narrative qualitative inquiry nature of the study, the suitability of intersectionality as the central framework for this study, the data collection and analysis procedures, the research site profile, my research positionality, and the limitations of the study.

A Qualitative Narrative Study

This dissertation presents a qualitative narrative study (Creswell, 2013) with the goal of exploring and understanding the lives of Latino/a non-academic employees at the University of Missouri (MU). Rooted in different social and humanities disciplines, the key to narrative research is to use stories as data, and more specifically, to capture the chronological first-person accounts of individuals’ experiences and the themes that stem from these experiences within multilayered contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; Merriam 2009; Moen, 2006; Spector-Mersel, 2010). A narrative qualitative approach was used because this methodology sheds light on veiled issues that traditional research overlooks and because this approach also empowers research study participants to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power dynamics that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study (Creswell, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011).

For social scientists, experience is a key term because we study experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is a collaboration between researchers and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, social interaction, and a plot that has beginning, middle, and end
Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told, and its use of stories as data is essential (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam, 2009). Narrative inquiry is a good fit for educational research, (Merriam, 2009; Webster & Mertova, 2007) because it is devoted to exploring complexity from a human centered perspective. The significance of narrative inquiry lies in its exploration of new ways of viewing and conducting research that addresses human performance in a variety of environments (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry is an appropriate contemporary approach for research in complex and dynamic environments and, in particular, for the study of human centeredness and complexity (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Narrative research is thus fundamentally concerned with the science of meanings, using as its data base the contextualized stories that people tell to mark and understand their actions, to construct an identity, and to distinguish themselves from others (Josselson, 2011). A qualitative narrative methodology is employed in this research study because qualitative methods are more compatible with the purpose and scope of intersectionality (Shields, 2008). I also strive to illuminate the meaning of the rich and unique human experiences of my participants; Latino/a non-academic employees who play a key role in the implementation of the educational mission of MU (Josselson, 2011).

There are no clear rules yet about how to conduct narrative research (Josselson, 2011). The aim is to elicit stories around a theme in as unobtrusive a manner possible, attending to the context of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, and then to analyze these stories in the framework of the questions that the researcher brings to them, giving due consideration to the linguistic and cultural contexts that shaped the account, both immediate and in terms of the larger culture (Josselson, 2011). Narrative research relies on thematic and discourse analysis.
(Josselson, 2011). Narrative research is unique because it strives to explore the whole story account rather than fragmenting it into discursive units or thematic categories (Josselson, 2011). In narrative research, it is not the parts that are significant in human life, but rather how these parts are integrated to create a whole, which is meaning (Josselson, 2011).

**Research Questions**

The central question of this study is: what are the life histories of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU and do issues of identity, power, and hierarchy emerge within those testimonies? (Anthias, 2013; Museus & Griffin, 2011; Nuñez, 2014). One secondary question includes: 1) What opportunities do Latino/a non-academic employees have to develop their professional and educational advancement? The research questions explored in this study aim to provide an understanding of specific issues that serve to disadvantage and exclude individuals or cultures, such as racism, sexism, unequal power relations, identity, or inequities in our society (Creswell, 2013). The Latino/a population in the U.S. continues to grow dramatically and this study is timely to understanding their influence to the U.S. workforce and higher education. Answering these research questions may help campus administrators, scholars, and practitioners, to understand and improve the experience of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU.

**Intersectionality: Relevance for this Research Study**

Qualitative research reveals how individuals make meaning and perceive power structures in shaping educational experiences according to their multiple identities (Abes 2012; Griffin and Reddick 2011; Jones 2009; Jones et. al., 2012; Nuñez, 2014; Murakami- Ramalho 2011; Ramirez 2013). Thus, the use of intersectionality within this narrative qualitative study serves as the perfect platform to explore and reflect upon the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees within various academic environments because this framework challenges
the power of oppressive structures in higher education, place the voices and experiences of the marginalized at the center of analysis, and methodologically direct researchers to appreciate the instrumental power of narrative and the experiential knowledge of marginalized populations in the face of injustice (Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012; Nuñez, 2014; Syed, 2010). One of the goals of intersectionality scholarship is to provide a language and safe space for stories to grow and generate their own truth and validation that bring about a psychological shift in how readers view the world (Litowitz 1996; Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012; Nuñez, 2014; Syed, 2010).

Qualitative research has the potential to examine power dynamics in depth (Nuñez, 2014). Specifically, Anthias (2013) asserts that applying intersectionality to study power relations must entail examining how (a) particular social categories inferior to others; (b) people in a capitalist world are viewed as part of a larger economic project and source of labor, rather than beings who could actualize their own potential; and (c) resources are distributed unevenly to enhance the life chances of some at the expense of others, particularly those in marginalized social categories (Nuñez, 2014). These recommendations were applied during the analysis of the data collected for this study.

The use of methodologies such as intersectionality in research means that the researcher centers inequality against underrepresented groups in all aspects of the research process; challenges traditional research methodologies that provide a single lens perspective on the experience of the marginalized; and offers transformative solutions to racial, gender, and class subordination in institutional structures (Creswell, 2013). I approached the entire study with exploratory, critical, and inquisitive questions that point toward the experiences of Latino/as in higher education. Viewing Latinos/as as a monolithic group in higher education at best obscures and at worst perpetuates misunderstanding and stereotyping about the multidimensionality of
their experiences (Nuñez, 2014). As Latinos/as become an increasingly significant presence in higher education, it is critical for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to recognize the diversity within this population (Torres, 2004). Accordingly, intersectionality holds much promise to affirm and examine the meaning of this diversity and how it plays out in various societal contexts over time (Nuñez, 2014).

Qualitative research is central to intersectionality (Syed, 2010). The historic links and theoretical compatibility between intersectionality theory and qualitative methods imply that the method and the theory are always already necessary to one another (Syed, 2010). I used intersectionality as a framework because capturing individuals’ measures of identity is essential as people’s identity can be deeply integrated into public discourse, policies and practices (Harper, 2011). I also used intersectionality to strive to understand the unique ways in which multiple intersecting social identities come together to shape my participants’ experiences, making distinctions in how they experience and engage their environments as a result of their unique position at particular intersections, rather than focusing attention on a singular identity (Choo & Ferree 2010; McCall, 2005; Ramachandran, 2005; Shields 2008; Museus & Griffin, 2011).

Consistent with narrative inquiry, applying this intersectionality perspective to Latino/a non-academic employees’ identities provided a more nuanced and holistic view of these individuals and their identity differences (Harper, 2011; Syed 2010). Some advocating for intersectionality would argue that the experiences within groups are distinctive according to the extent to which they are members of other marginalized or privileged populations, but the goal of intersectional analyses is not to develop a hierarchy of oppression that is based on the
assumption that having multiple marginalized identities simply equates to more experiences discrimination (Berger & Guidroz, 2009; Museus & Griffin, 2011).

Qualitative research is used to generate theories “when partial or inadequate theories exist for certain populations and samples of existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem we are examining” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48). While this study will not be generating new theories, this dissertation has contributed to advance the emerging intersectionality literature providing an empirical study with a stronger emphasis in issues of power relations and the disfranchised in higher education.

**Testimonio: As a Methodological Tool**

*Testimonio* was chosen as the narrative methodological tool for this study because it advocates for Latin Americans and offers a personal account that allows researchers to engage in deeper personal access of the topic of study with thick description of personal experiences (Beverley, 2005; Esparza 2012; Huber & Cueva, 2012). The use of testimonio in this study provided insight into the professional and personal lives of Latino/a non-academic employees working at MU. Originating in Latin American contexts of revolutionary, emancipatory, and human rights movements, testimonio is a conceptual and methodological narrative tool that transforms personal narrative into a narrative of opposition to dominant system and ideologies (Anzaldúa, 1990; Behar, 1993; Delgado-Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores-Carmona, 2012; Espino, Vega, Rendon, Ranero, & Muñiz, 2012; Huber & Cueva, 2012; Riessman, 2008; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). On a practical level, testimonio involves the participant in a critical reflection of his or her personal experience within particular sociopolitical realities (Delgado-Bernal et al; 2012).
Scholars in the field of education are increasingly using testimonio as a pedagogical, methodological, and activist approach to social justice that challenges traditional paradigms in academia (Delgado-Bernal et al, 2012). These approaches to education research have resulted in new understanding about how marginalized communities build solidarity and respond to and resist dominant culture, laws, and policies that perpetuate inequity (Delgado-Bernal et al, 2012). For instance, LatCrit scholars are challenged to demonstrate that these testimonios are scholarly sound and can influence higher education policy to ultimately humanize its practice (Litowitz, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Maldonado & Maldonado, 2012). This dissertation’s focus on exploring the testimonios of Latino/a non-academic employees hopes to have contributed to the understanding of these employees’ personal, educational, and professional experiences and journey in higher education.

**Participants and Sampling Procedures**

I interviewed two Latino/a employees working in non-academic roles at MU because narrative research is best for capturing the detailed and in depth stories or life experiences of a single individual or the lives of a small number of individuals (Creswell, 2013). A purposeful sampling technique was used to recruit one male and one female employee who work in non-academic positions at MU.

Under the pseudonyms, Jose and Maria, my participants were interviewed separately in different sessions. Jose was interviewed during a two-hour session and Maria was interviewed in two different 90 minute sessions. Seidman’s (2013) interview approach and the same set of questions were used for both participants, but Jose was able to answer the questions in less time. This difference in interview duration may also be because Jose may not have wanted to develop lengthy accounts of his life with a stranger (Riessman, 2008). Interviews were conducted in the
participants’ native language: Spanish. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in the original Spanish language and the rich and thick portions (Merriam, 2009) of these interviews are included in chapter four to help co-construct the participants’ life experiences (Clandinin & Conelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008).

Jose and Maria were approachable and enthusiastically consented to participate in this research study because I had interacted with them in the past through my involvement in Latino/a campus outreach activities. Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants received a stipend of 20 dollars per interview session. To protect the identity of my participants I conducted these interviews outside their regular work hours. Many Latino/a non-academic employees in labor intensive low paying positions like Jose and Maria have second jobs in the evening times, and the compensation helped ameliorate any financial distress for the potential of missing evening work. I recruited my participants face-to-face by visiting their workplace and approaching them during break times. I explained to Jose and Maria about the purpose of my study and how it strives to contribute to the experiences of Latinos/as in higher education.

Research Context

When individuals tell about their lived experiences, they are not isolated and independent of their context, and they are irreducibly connected to their social, cultural and institutional setting (Moen, 2006). It is important to describe the research site context of this study to have a better understanding of the lived experiences of Latino non-academic employees at MU.

This research study took place at MU which is the first public university west of the Mississippi River. MU is a major land-grant institution with a statewide mission of service to citizens and Missouri’s largest public research university (About Mizzou, n.d.). Considered a $2.1 billion enterprise and an important investment for the state and nation, MU is the flagship
campus of the four-campus University of Missouri System (About Mizzou, n.d.). It is one of only 34 public universities, and the only public institution in Missouri, to be selected for membership in the Association of American Universities (AAU) (About Mizzou, n.d.).

Although MU brings a legacy of charged racial campus climate, the administration has in recent years taken steps to create and more diverse and inclusive campus such as the creation of the Chancellor Diversity Initiative (Mizzou Diversity, n.d.). MU employs close to 28,000 workers where 8% are dedicated to service and maintenance positions (Mizzou Diversity, n.d.). Only 2% of service and maintenance employees at this mid-MU are Latino/a, which is representative of this mid-western PWI campus figures with 2.8% of Latino/a faculty and 3% of students (Mizzou Diversity, n.d.). Most Latino/a non-academic employees at MU work in non-academic, student affairs, and auxiliary services departments (Ayllon, 2013; Mizzou Diversity, n.d.). Although non-academic employees in maintenance/service areas represent the highest concentration of Latinos/as on the MU campus, they actually are the least visible as the nature of their daily work does not allow their exposure to other departments and offices around campus (Ayllon, 2013; Mizzou Diversity, n.d.). The hard work and monotonous labor of these employees frequently goes unnoticed as they arrive to work early in the morning and leave before the end of the regular work day (Ayllon, 2013).

The University of Missouri System currently offers eligible employees a steep discount per credit hour for college-level courses (Mizzou Weekly, 2014). In an unprecedented benefits option for higher education workers, Total Rewards and MU’s College of Education have teamed up to offer university employees the opportunity to complete high school courses online at no cost (Mizzou Weekly, 2014). MU High School is a fully accredited institution established in 1998 and administered by the College of Education (Mizzou Weekly, 2014). No reliable data
exists on how many university employees do not have a high school degree, though the number is presumed to be low (Mizzou Weekly, 2014). The benefits of this program to eligible employees could be significant (Mizzou Weekly, 2014).

Data Sources and Process of Analysis

Data collection. Consistent with narrative qualitative research and intersectionality theoretical principles, my goal was to be sensitive to power imbalances between my participants and I during all facets of the research process in my study (Creswell, 2013; Madison 2005). These imbalances can be caused by the socioeconomic, educational, and career differences between my participants and I. I am privileged to hold an “office type” of managerial/administrative job while my participants work in physically demanding labor intensive positions: custodian and food service worker.

I used semi-structured in-depth interviews as the principal means to collect data because interviews offer powerful ways to gain insight into educational issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues (Hammersley, 2008; Riesmann, 2008; Seidman, 2013; Spector-Mersel, 2010). Using in-depth interviews for my data collection was consistent with narrative inquiry and my intersectionality theoretical framework. A strength of this method is that I gained understanding of the details of my participants’ experiences from their point of view (Seidman, 2013). I also saw how my participants’ individual experiences interact with powerful social and organizational forces that pervade the context in which they live and work (Seidman, 2013).

Interviews, though important, are the most widely used method of data collection in the human sciences, represent only one source of knowledge about a phenomenon or group (Riessman, 2008). However, if sensitively practiced, interviews can offer a way, in many
research situations, for investigators to forge dialogic relationships and greater communicative equality (Riessman, 2008). Toward this end, it is preferable to have repeated conversations rather than the typical one-shot interview, especially when studying biographical experience (Riessman, 2008). Thus, I specifically attempted to use Seidman’s three interview-series approach. The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience (Seidman, 2013). The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which occurs (Seidman, 2013). And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experiences hold for them (Seidman, 2013). During my first interview session, the main question that I asked was “where are you from and what led you to your current position at MU?” This first question was aimed at getting more of a biography of my participants. On my second interview session, I asked “how would you describe your work experience at MU in your current department?” On my final session, I asked “what are your plans for the future?”

The goal in narrative interviewing is to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements (Riessman, 2008). Looking at how interviewees connect their responses into a sustained account or bigger story brings opportunities for more in depth observations that are not visible when attention is restricted to question-answer exchanges (Mishler, 1986). My active participation as an engaged interviewer critically shaped the stories participants choose to tell (Riessman, 2008).

My interviews were conducted in the Spanish language as agreed with my participants. The interview questions surveyed the participants’ demographics, professional status, acculturation level, language skills, and their perception of cultural climate at their workplace. As I conducted interviews, I asked questions pointed to help my participants describe the role of their multiple social identities and associated systems of power and oppression in shaping their
work experiences at MU (e.g., Abes 2012; Griffin & Reddick 2011; Jones, 2009; Nuñez & Murakami-Ramalho 2011).

I protected the identity of my participants as much as possible. I encouraged my participants to use pseudonyms because there are few Latino/a non-academic employees at MU, which makes them easily identifiable. MU Latino/a non-academic employees are a vulnerable population as many of them are employed at will or yearly contracts, have limited English proficiency, and may not have earned post-secondary degrees. To address the trust and fear of potential issues with my interviewees, I created a bilingual (Spanish/English) interview protocol and explained to my interviewees that their identities will were protected and kept confidential. These efforts on confidentiality and the use of the Spanish language gave my participants freedom to share their stories and experiences without fear of retaliation from their departments or supervisors.

Data analysis. The manner in which stories are interpreted is a crucial part of narrative methodologies, and the data collected in this narrative study were analyzed for the stories participants have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, voices, and turning points or epiphanies (Josselson, 2011; Riesman, 2008; Spector-Mersel, 2010). I examined life events from the stories my participants share with me (Creswell, 2013). Consistent with narrative inquiry, my approach was to re-story the stories into an account of my participants’ experiences that follow a chronology of events. I used a structural narrative analysis approach of data coding to meticulously read each interview transcript to find a central plot, characters, and relevant chronological events of my participants’ stories (Riessman, 2008). After reading both transcripts and identifying the plots of these stories, I used a thematic coding technique to pinpoint all themes and sub-themes emerging from the participants’ stories (Clandinin & Conelly, 2000;
In order to best capture and categorize the key themes of my participants’ experiences, I listed all themes that emerged from the participants’ interviews and counted the number of times (Merriam, 2009) that these themes were repeated as central themes or sub-themes within my participants’ stories (Merriam, 2009). The combined use of structural and thematic analysis also helped me identify the different voices, the silence, and identities within each of my participants (Clandinin & Conelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008).

Analysis is a creative process of organizing data so that the analytic scheme will emerge (Josselson, 2011). I focused on the voices within each narrative, attending to the layering of voices (subjects positions), and their interactions (Josselson, 2011). I also paid attention to the content of the narration (“the told”) and the structure of the narration (“the telling”) (Josselson, 2011). Most importantly, I paid attention to what was unsaid or unsayable by providing a safe space for my participants and looking at the structure of the narrative discourse and markers of omissions (Josselson, 2011). After each of my participant’s stories was understood as well as possible, I compared the data from Jose and Maria’s stories to discover patterns across individual narrative interview texts or to explore what may create differences between their experiences as service/maintenance employees in at MU (Josselson, 2011).

I used an intersectionality-based thematic method to analyze the data collected through the participants’ interviews. I specifically analyzed the data sections (e.g., interview clips) that contained rich and thick descriptions supporting the components of intersectionality framework such as the emphasis on gender, power, and systematic oppression (Merriam, 2009). The use of intersectionality in the thematic analysis served as a tool for interpretation of the spoken and unspoken participants’ stories (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008; Riessman, 2008).
**Trustworthiness & Positionality.** Narrative truths are always partial-committed and incomplete, and it does not produce conclusions of certainty (Riesmman, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). In narrative based research, trustworthiness is more concerned with the research being well grounded and supportable by the data that has been collected (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative scholars would generally agree that a narrative is not a simply factual report of events, but instead one articulation told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a similar way (Riessman, 2008). Thus, in narrative research, verifying the facts is less important than understanding their actual meanings for individuals and groups (Riessman, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) affirm that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth, and it involves: 1) credibility: confidence in the 'truth' of the findings; 2) transferability: showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts; 3) dependability: showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated; and 4) confirmability: a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

The results of narrative research cannot claim to correspond exactly to what has actually occurred (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry is more concerned with individual truths than identifying generalizable and repeatable events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In narrative research reliability usually refers to the dependability of the data, while validity typically refers to the strength of the analysis of data, the trustworthiness of the data, and ease of access to the data (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Wolcott (2010) and Creswell (2013) argue that researchers often pursue research based on reflexivity of their own life events. My interest in studying the lived experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees in a mid-western predominantly White institution originated from my
own personal experience as a Latino employee at MU. In addition to my current role as a full-time international educator and as a part-time student in an educational leadership and policy analysis doctoral program, I served as president of MU Voz Latina (formerly known as Hispanic-Latin American Faculty and Staff Association) at MU for 5 consecutive years.

Throughout my academic, professional, and personal life, issues of social injustice have interested and intrigued me. These experiences coupled with my more recent exposure to intersectionality, shaped the focus of this study (Creswell, 2013). Throughout my doctoral program, through class discussions on reflexivity, positionality, and social theory, I have been challenged to become vulnerable and make explicit the “why” of my research. My life calling is to use my skills and knowledge to empower others, bring positive influence, and change my community. I strive to fulfill my life calling in all the areas of my life, but especially in the kinds of research I undertake, the way I design and conduct my research, ways I interact with my participants, and the ways I represent my findings to readers.

During my college career, I understood and embraced the social justice calling of my spiritual faith. I studied college in a predominantly White small liberal arts Christian institution with very little ethnic diversity. Although I am a Christian and shared a common spiritual bond with my college peers and professors, I often struggled with isolation and fear throughout my college career because of stark differences with peers centering on race, ethnicity, economic status, and political views.

My research interest centering on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees also sparked from my own personal experience working as a janitor and dishwasher during my college years. Working as a janitor and dishwasher in a wealthy predominantly White private college was a transformational experience for me. I had grown up in a middle/upper class family
in Lima, Peru where I never cleaned a toilet. Thus, working as a janitor and dishwasher overturned my world and helped me recognize my past privileges as a middle/upper class Latin American man. I worked as a janitor in the U.S. because I could not afford tuition without a having a part-time job. Cleaning toilets and washing windows was a means to complete my college degree. Certainly, I recognize that working as temporary janitor is much different than working as a career janitor. As I explore the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU, I am mindful that I am not an expert on manual labor types of issues and do not know “what it feels like” to work in labor-intensive positions. I am a middle class Latino researcher whose previous temporary experience as a janitor sparked intellectual curiosity and unveiled my heart’s desire to tell the fascinating silent stories of outstanding Latino men and women who happen to work in non-academic positions.

I was also drawn to pursue this research study because of the alarming existing research gap on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees in higher education. Although non-academic employees in the service/maintenance area represent the highest concentration of Latinos/as at MU (Mizzou Diversity n.d.), these employees are actually the least visible as the nature of their daily work does not allow their exposure to other colleagues, departments, and offices around campus.

At the surface, my study poses no serious ethical problems or harm to my participants. However, there are several critical questions that I need to wrestle with as a researcher. I am aware that ethical matters shift and change during the research process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The type of research that I am doing is also in many ways collaborative research, which requires a close relationship close to friendship (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, from a relational point of view, I have to consider my responsibility as a narrative researcher with my
participants. Anonymity is another ethical issue that came up during my research process because Jose was interested in using his real name for this study. For the purpose of this dissertation, I persuaded Jose to use a pseudonym, but we will revisit this discussion as I pursue publishing opportunities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial (Lincoln & Guba 1985). In my study, I ensured trustworthiness, protect participants’ identities, maximize the reliability of the study, by asking my participants to participate in member checks sessions to ensure that I am accurately portraying their stories (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba 1985; Merriam 2009). To strengthened the trustworthiness of my study, I also followed a methodical and explicit path, guided by ethical considerations and intersectionality theory, to analyze my findings (Riessman, 2008). I strongly believe that this study brought a rigorous qualitative narrative study through a focus on a small sample of single individuals, the collection of chronological stories about significant issues related to these individuals’ life, the analysis of what and how was said in the participants stories, and my participation as a reflexive researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Limitations

Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) raise these important questions for narrative research: who owns the story? Who can tell it? Who can change it? Whose version in convincing? What happens when narratives compete? There are no “black” and “white” answers to these critical questions, other than the researcher must establish a transparent and equitable relationship with the participants of a narrative study to wrestle through these questions. Narrative research is indeed a challenging approach to use as the researcher needs to develop an in-depth relationship with participants in order to collect extensive information about the participant and the context of
the individual’s life (Creswell, 2013). The lack of field observations is also a limitation of this study.

Intersectionality shows much promise in exploring how multiple social identities and their relationships with interlocking systems of power, influence educational equity, particularly for historically underrepresented groups in higher education (Nuñez, 2014; Valdes, 1998). However, intersectionality scholarship has predominantly focused on individual experiences rather than the workings of institutional structures (Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 2007, 2009), leaving a need to interrogate more deeply how “the broader social landscape of power and hierarchy” (Anthias, 2013, p. 12) influences life opportunities (Nuñez, 2014). While intersectionality has served to unveil the experiences of underrepresented groups in higher education, there still needs to be more intersectionality research focused on deeper analysis of power dynamics in institutional structures to advance the intersectionality influence in higher education scholarship (Collins, 2009, ix; Cho et al., 2013; Davis, 2008; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Harper, 2011; Nuñez, 2014).

Much of the work employing intersectionality focuses on the perspectives of the study participants, rather than other actors (e.g., administrators) who could actually shape those participants’ experiences in higher education (Nuñez, 2014). Thus, I hope that my study on experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees generated ideas for new research studies and encourages scholars to focus on the structural levels of domains of power and historicity as units of analyses (Cho et al. 2013; Nuñez, 2014).
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of this research study including an explanation of the narrative, the participants’ testimonios, and the overarching themes related to the research questions on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU.

Narrative Orientation

The narratives for this study are centered around the lives of two Latino/a non-academic employees at the University of Missouri (MU). One of these employees is a male individual and the other participant is a female. To protect their identities, I assigned the male participant the pseudonym of Jose, and the female participant the pseudonym of Maria. Both Jose and Maria work for the same non-academic division at MU, but in different departments within that unit. Jose works as a custodian and Maria works as a kitchen assistant. They are both foreign-born Latinos of Mexican origin, and each has worked at the university for over a decade. Maria works in one central building, and Jose rotates within different buildings of the university.

Testimonios

Consistent with narrative inquiry, in this section I re-story my participants’ stories into an account of their experiences by selecting key interview segments and life events that reflect the richness of their live’s experiences (Riessman, 2008). I re-story the data sections that exhibit thick and descriptive episodes of my participants’ stories related to the intersectionality framework to provide a more nuanced understanding of my participants’ identities (Syed, 2010). After I share each of my participant’s stories, I perform a cross-narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Cresswell, 2013; Riessman 2008) to discover common themes across my participants’ experiences as non-academic employees in a PWI such as MU. While a cross-
narrative analysis will help highlight the commonalities of my participants’ experiences related to areas such as gender, work roles, departmental culture, and power, it will ultimately emphasize their unique differences as individuals (Syed, 2010). Through my data analysis, I draw primarily from the works of sociologist and educational leadership scholars such as Nuñez (2014), Anthias (2013), Dill and Zambrana (2009), Roscigno (2011) to use intersectionality as a driving lens to go beyond a focus on the individual identities of my participants “and to look at the broader social landscape of power and hierarchy” (Anthias, 2013, p. 12) in higher education access and opportunity for Latinos/as.

The next paragraphs describe biographical accounts that attempt to summarize the entire life’s accounts of my participants and follow my participants down their trails (Riessman, 2008, p. 24). Consistent with narrative research, this section presents a synthesis of first person accounts of my participants’ experiences told with a “beginning, middle, and end” (Merriam, 2009, p.32). The stories of my participants emerge from the life experiences they told me about and the stories my participants co-constructed with me through semi-structured leading questions (Creswell, 2013; Riessman, 2008).

**Maria: “la Madre Coraje”**

I have seen Maria on campus a few times throughout my 8-year career at MU, but never had officially met her until I asked her to participate in my research study. The few times I ran into Maria in the campus dining halls, I would notice her focused professional demeanor at work: walking fast, cleaning tables, bringing hot dishes, monitoring student workers. I would tell myself, “this lady is driven and always on top of things. I bet she has an interesting story to tell….” I finally developed the guts to approach Maria and schedule an interview after several
weeks of eating lunch at the dining hall where she works. I must admit that I felt somewhat intimated by Maria’s professional zeal and was hesitant to interrupt her work routine.

I interviewed Maria in two separate sessions in a campus location near her workplace. There were 43 themes and 83 sub-themes that emerged throughout my interviews with Maria. The semi-structured questions used for each interview sessions all pointed towards the main research questions of this study centered on exploring the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU and their sense of agency within the larger university community. While there would be many different ways to define who Maria is, I would describe her as a courageous self-made woman who has managed to successfully navigate the personal and societal identity pressures of being an outstanding employee, mother, wife, student, and woman simultaneously. The multiple hardships that she has experienced in life have shaped her as a resilient, resourceful, and driven woman who deeply cares about her family and her professional career.

Consistent with the complexity and richness of narrative inquiry, there was never a linear chronological trajectory within Marias’ stories. When interviewing Maria, I noticed a communication pattern where she would introduce me to and talk about different people and episodes in her life that later would come back again and again intertwined in deeper and messier raw stories. The more I spoke with Maria, the more comfortable she felt about disclosing stories and unfolding each of the characters in her life plot. She came to the point to share about the abuse of her father against her mother, her husband’s struggle with drugs, and her daughter’s multiple suicide attempts. The free flow and rapport of our conversation gave her the freedom to return to as many unfinished topics as she needed to. I wondered why she trusted me so much to tell me all these details about her story? I think it because the power of narrative research relies on giving individuals the opportunity to “construct, deconstruct, and re-construct their
stories” (Josselson, 2011, p. 224). This is because unlike traditional positivist inquiry, the focus of narrative research is not on asking the “right questions”, but rather in the process of building a safe space for the construction of the participants’ own stories (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Clandinin & Conelly, 2000). Thus, the next paragraphs present a summary of vivid episodes within Maria’s life that help us understand the intersectionality of her multiple identities.

**The origins—her immigrant journey.** The story of Maria starts in a small town in Mexico where she grew up and studied. She grew up in a middle class family in Mexico, and she had her first job when she was 12 years old at a local restaurant. Maria completed all her education in Mexico up until college where she pursued a bachelor’s degree in nursing all while raising a daughter as a single mother and working in a restaurant. She met the man who is now her husband at this restaurant where she worked in Mexico. Both Maria’s and her husband’s families knew each other because they are from the same small town in Mexico.

Maria was only one semester away from college graduation when she decided to travel to California for vacation where she would meet up with her new boyfriend, the man that she met in the restaurant.

**Maria:** I came to California during summer vacations.
**Me:** California?
**Maria:** Yes California. I went there for summer vacations in July and had to return to Mexico in August to finish my college degree.
**Me:** Ok
**Maria:** but I never returned (…to Mexico)
**Me:** Sure
**Maria:** because my now husband, declared his love to me, and ask me to marry him
**Me:** so you are here now! (laughter)
**Maria:** so I came to visit, and I am still here
**Me:** you have had a long visit (laughter)
**Maria:** Yes, that’s how it went (laughter). It was interesting…
**Me:** So you stayed, you got married, and you left your life in Mexico…
**Maria:** I obtained…finished, I was able to finish, a 2-year bachelors
**Me:** sure
Maria: what here is referred to “bachelor’s degree”
Me: yes, yes, yes…
Maria: I have my nursing documents…

And that’s how Maria’s 19-year journey as an immigrant in the United States began. Now a U.S. citizen, Maria managed to finish her nursing associate degree in Mexico and has had much experience working in the food and restaurant industry. Through the dialogue above, education is very important to Maria. It was important for her to let me know that she did finish her associates degree in Mexico before moving to the U.S. At that early point of the interview, I was already getting Maria’s message that she was a self-made woman. She wanted me to know that she was already “someone” before getting married.

After a couple of years working in California, Maria noticed that work life was very competitive and living was expensive. She then decided to move to Columbia, MO because her brother was living there and told her that he would help them get settled and find a job. However, it actually took me until the middle of the interview to understand the ultimate reason why they moved from California to Missouri. Maria’s husband was a car mechanic in California, and his shop caught on fire and he lost everything. Maria’s brother was helping them start from scratch. Maria and her husband teamed up and found a job together at a Missouri farm. Maria’s husband would lead a group of workers, while Maria prepared meals for all of them. Because of his English and Spanish proficiency, Maria’s husband served as liaison between the farm owners and the Latino workers.

Maria’s childhood. By default, Maria would tell me stories centered on her work at MU, but through some pointed questions I brought her back to her childhood years so I could gain a better overview of how her childhood and upbringing molded her as the woman she is today. She first described her childhood as very good because her father worked in the Mexican navy
and she described her family as middle class. Maria’s first mention of her mother was that “she was working all the time.” Her grandparents owned a ranch, and she went to private school during the first years of her education. After a surface level description of her family and childhood, Maria brought up her childhood again later in the interview as she discussed the relationship she had with her own children.

**Maria:** If I cannot help them, I find a way to help them. Why? Because I did not have parents that took care of me, yes, we lived a middle class life

**Me:** overall, stable?

**Maria:** but my parents never went to school to ask: “how is my daughter doing? How are her classes going? How are her grades? They never attended parent meetings at school.

**Me:** they were more concerned about work…

**Maria:** yes, they were dedicated to work above all, and… my dad, even though he had a good, he was an alcoholic

**Me:** Ok. I see

**Maria:** He was an alcoholic… so we had the financial stability, but we did not have family unity

Maria proceeded to share that her father would often argue with and beat her mother because of his alcoholism. Certainly, it took Maria almost an hour to tell me that her father was an alcoholic. Later on, Maria would share her husband’s struggles with drugs and alcohol.

**Her mother.** Through my conversations with Maria we co-constructed the key role that her mother played in her life story. Maria’s mother was the youngest of five children. “My mother was the youngest one…and the most rebellious one, and tough.” Maria vividly recalls the interactions between her mother and her aunt when she was a child. Maria’s aunt was not allowed to wear pants or go out of the house in the evening. Maria did not like the “machismo” that her uncle imposed at home. Maria’s mother would often encourage her aunt to stand up for herself: “because you are a woman you don’t have to submit to your husband orders, you have the right to defend yourself.”
The powerful influence of her mother can be seen in Maria’s approach to work, family, and how she raises her children. For example, she has taught her children to keep their rooms clean, take the trash out, and wash dishes to help around the house.

Maria: so [my children] have to learn because I am not going to be here forever. They have to learn because that is how my mother taught me. My mother told my brothers: “you have to learn how to wash clothes, to cook, to clean the house because you never know what type of woman you will end up with. You may very well have to train the woman that you end up with.”

Me: wow! How interesting! So you would say that because you had a strong and hard working mother, you are the woman that you are today?

Maria: yes. Overall…in some areas. Because my mom was very harsh when giving orders.

Me: oh, and you didn’t like that?

Maria: no, I didn’t like that

Me: and you have changed this with your children?

Maria: Yes. My mother was tough. My mother was…she would hit us until bleeding, in anger. You need to have patience with children…but it also depends on the husband that you get because she suffered domestic abuse with my father because he was an alcoholic.

Me: so you have learned to choose the positive things about your parents to pass them along to your children?

Maria: yes.

After a long pause I managed to find the guts to ask Maria: have you forgiven your mother?

Maria: yes, yes

Me: you understand her?

Maria: yes, I forgave her many years ago and I understand her, but I once told her: “you are still the same person today.” She doesn’t care. (Maria said this referring to her mother’s unwillingness to change her views).

Maria’s mother currently lives in Mexico and divorced Maria’s father several years ago. She got remarried later on but still has marital issues with her new spouse. Maria now finds herself giving her mother advice on marriage and health issues.

La familia—“lo mas importante.” Earlier in her career, when she first moved to Columbia, Maria worked at a local Mexican restaurant. She played a key role in the food preparation of this restaurant, and brought many new recipes for traditional Mexican dishes. One
day that she showed up late for work because her son got unexpectedly sick, she had a difficult confrontation with the restaurant owner where she was threatened to be fired.

**Maria (to the restaurant owner):** for me, family is first, and I cannot always be here when you need…I am sorry. And if you want me to leave, I would.

**Restaurant Owner:** yes, I want you out of here. And you are going to leave your recipes with us.

**Maria:** “No. The recipes are mine” (as she tore the papers with recipes in front of the restaurant owner).

There are other instances where Maria has shown her visceral loyalty towards her family. Through several instance in her career, Maria has felt the pressure that her work can put into her family. Her current job in the dining hall can be challenging with her family schedule during the summers. During the summer the university runs summer schools and camps with fluctuating enrollment, which affects the schedules of service employees. Depending on the number of camps secured each summer, it is not until June or July that MU employees learn about their specific job assignment, location, and hours.

**Maria:** you cannot choose

**Me:** They send you wherever

**Maria:** yes, they send you wherever they want. This is the only thing that always bothers me. It bothers me because I have to come up with another plan because I have a family. My children are not in school (in the summer), and I have to pay extra money for day care

**Me:** I see, I see.

**Maria:** and the managers are not going to advocate for you…that bothers me.

Through this exchange, Maria shed light into the struggle of most American working class families: choosing between family and work responsibilities. Both husband and wife have to be employed to provide for their family basic needs. Maria does not mention here if her husband assists with the care of her children. In the *machista* culture it is expected that women take time off work whenever children get sick so as to avoid interruptions to the husband’s work
schedule. Maria also feels that her managers take little consideration to how her odd summer schedule negatively impacts time her family.

**The battle for her daughter.** As mentioned in the first part of Maria’s story, she had a daughter who lived with her in Mexico. When Maria first immigrated to the U.S. and got married to her now husband, she thought that she could bring her daughter with her. When she got married in California to her husband, she received erroneous information, and she was not able to include her daughter on her marriage documentation.

**Maria:** When I went to the U.S. immigration office, they never told me
**Me:** they never told you
**Maria:** they never told me
**Me:** oh
**Maria:** look, you see me crying
**Me:** it is ok…
**Maria:** it is because I lost
**Me:** sure
**Maria:** I lost all of my daughter’s childhood because of this paper work. My daughter was raised without a mother or father
**Me:** how many years was that?
**Maria:** I brought her here when she turned 15 years old. I left her when she was five or six, I left her.
**Me:** wow…And I can’t begin to imagine how hard this must have been…
**Maria:** my life here was very difficult
**Me:** sure, sure…I also have a daughter, and I could not imagine
**Maria:** yes, yes, this was a sacrifice…I lost all of my daughter’s childhood, but the good thing is that she is here with me now…

This was by far the most personal and emotional point of the interview. Here I saw a powerful display of emotion as Maria cried for several minutes during this section of the interview. I can see that Maria is dealing with guilt, and she does not want to be judged as a bad mother. Maria became very vulnerable to share her daughter’s story. She further shared that her daughter has attempted to commit suicide in the past as a consequence of this long 5 years of separation. She waited for a long time for her daughter’s U.S. visa documentation to get approved. Bringing her
daughter to the U.S. was a troublesome journey where her status as US permanent resident did not help much. Maria had to actually become a US citizen to accelerate the process to reunite with her daughter. “When you become a citizen, your daughter will automatically become a citizen,” Maria was told. After 5 years as lawful resident, Maria applied for citizenship and obtained it, but there was no progress or updates from US immigration serving on the process of bringing her daughter to the US. So she made an appointment with the Missouri governor’s office.

Maria: I went to the governor’s office and I had a talk with him and told him that this was unfair
Me: the Missouri governor?
Maria: yes, in Kansas City
Me: wow
Maria: I had an appointment with the governor in Kansas City. He made a phone call, sent a document, and a month after this appointment, my daughter was called by U.S. immigration for an appointment
Me: wow… so the governor helped you?
Maria: yes, he helped me
Me: so your daughter was able to come to the US
Maria: yes, my daughter was able to come
Me: at 15 years of age:
Maria: yes, at 15 years of age

Later Maria would mention that during the 5 years of separation from her daughter, she would visit her two or three times for a period of one or two weeks because of work, which was not enough time.

Maria: I battled a lot to bring my daughter to the US
Me: wow
Maria: so when my daughter finally came to live with me, she was a stranger, and I was a stranger for her
Me: sure, you had to start all over again
Maria: it took us 2 years
Me: sure
Maria: to understand each other
Maria’s daughter experienced difficulty adapting to the U.S. culture, the food, the language, but also to her new family in the U.S. Maria’s husband would get jealous and furious because she was not as focused on him and the kids that she had with him. They would constantly argue about this issue on their marriage for two years, and they almost got a divorce. Until Maria decided to directly confront her husband: “you know what, my children are more important, whatever happens, my children are going to be with me, you can go ahead and leave”… “if you are not going to accept my daughter, we cannot be together anymore.” After this confrontation, Maria and her husband sought marriage counseling and were able to work out this marital issue. It was through this counseling session that Maria also learned that her daughter went through extensive therapy in Mexico to help her overcome suicidal thoughts. Maria was upset that her mother in Mexico had not kept her informed of her daughter’s struggles with depression and suicide. As Maria wrapped up the memories of this period of her journey, she concludes, “I battled a lot, and even today, as I already mentioned, I give my children…for any of them, whatever happens.”

Her daughter is now 23 years old and is married. Maria rejoices in getting Mother’s Day cards from her. Through co-construction I helped Maria trace where the relationship between her daughter and her currently stands.

Maria: she sends me such beautiful letters that I feel proud to be her mother  
Me: Aww  
Maria: That thanks to me, she is here  
Me: Wow. So there has been a good reconciliation.  
Maria: yes, a very good one, a very good one.  
Me: wow, so you have a good relationship.  
Maria: yes, very good

Through Maria’s story to reunite with her daughter we see a raw and powerful story of suffering and hardship, but in the end we see the beauty of reconciliation and forgiveness.
**The habit of confronting power.** One of the recurring themes in Maria’s story in her habit of confronting power. Whether at home, work, or at her children’s school, Maria does not think twice when it comes to defending her rights or the rights of her loved ones. Nevertheless, through my conversations with Maria, I learned that work is very important to her. She works hard and is efficient. She is not afraid of responsibility and strives to do all her job duties with excellence. Maria works in a very hierarchical environment with several organization layers. She began at the lowest level of the ‘food chain’ and with time and dedication she worked her way up to reach at “level four” of expertise in her dining hall functions. It took Maria 5 years to reach this level four of hierarchy, and there are no more levels to move up except for managerial positions. Unless Maria completes a bachelor’s degree and/or master’s degree the level four will be a glass ceiling in her professional career. Not surprisingly, most of the events related to the confrontation of power occur within the context of Maria’s work experience.

As professors take pride on the research they conduct and managerial staff celebrates successful projects, the food industry has chefs who compete for the best recipes. Maria tells the story of a big conflict she had with one of the chefs in her dining hall. Maria describes the chef as a recent college graduate who had not had much work experience. The tension between Maria and this chef started when the new workers would prefer to train with Maria rather than completing training with the chef. Maria noticed that these dynamics would make the young chef feel uncomfortable and told him: “I don’t want to take your job…I don’t want it.” Nevertheless, the conflict between Maria and the young chef escalated during a campus wide dining services recipe competition. Maria had created a tequila-based recipe for a chicken dish, which the chef was hesitant to approve. “I need to check with the executive chef, he told Maria.”
Maria already knew the executive chef from previous collaborations, and called him about her recipe. During their conversation, the executive chef encouraged Maria to use her tequila-based chicken recipe. When Maria updated the younger chef about the executive chef’s approval, she noticed that he got very upset.

**The chef:** I told you that you could not use this recipe!!!
**Maria:** You never gave me a clear answer so I took the liberty to check with the executive chef…Because the executive chef told me in the past that I can call him anytime that I had a question or concern

**The chef:** No. What is happening here is that you are talking behind my back…
**Maria:** You know what…here are the recipes. (And Maria threw him the recipes) and [I] will no longer participate in the competition. And if I am asked, why I am not participating, I will tell people that it because you are taking this to an unnecessary level

The executive chef approached Maria a few days later and ask her if she was ready to submit her chicken recipe for the competition. Maria then explained the incident she had with the younger chef. The executive chef then told Maria: “Don’t worry about it... I am going to talk to him.” Maria then explained that this is the first time she had worker with a chef with such a bad temper. “I reported him with my manager,” Maria said. Through this incident Maria learned more about the power and hierarchy dynamics in her workplace. From my conversations with Maria, it was unclear to me whether she formally presented a complaint against the young chef via bias report of if she just verbally informed her manager. It is unknown whether Maria’s manager addressed the incident and followed up with the chef. Through this story, the miscommunication between the executive chef and the younger chef emerged. It seems logical that the degree of approachability exhibited by the executive chef would trickle down and positively influence the management style of middle and entry level managers. However, this was not the case. This incident may unveil a communication disconnect between hierarchy levels in this non-academic department.
Through these stories, Maria has a strong determination and courage to confront people with more hierarchical power than her. However, one can also notice that at times Maria lacked conflict resolution skills to understand the hierarchical nature of her work environment and the consequences of hurting someone’s ego in the university workplace. With training, Maria could also learn how to manage up her supervisors without alienating them.

Maria told me the story when she had requested a weekend off, and she received verbal approval for it by her direct supervisor. Maria stressed the fact that she had made this request with 2 weeks of anticipation. When the weekend time arrived, she received a call from her supervisors asking her to report to work as soon as possible. Maria vividly describes the moment she received the phone call from her supervisor:

**Maria:** My blood started to boil when she called me and we argued about my time off… how dare you call me when you had already approved my… I am sorry but I am not showing up.

**Supervisor:** I want you to report to my office first thing Monday morning to fix this…

**Maria:** No problem. I will see you on Monday.

When Monday arrived, Maria met with her direct supervisor and was determined not to sign the written warning form that her supervisor had prepared for the meeting.

**Maria (addressing her supervisor):** I am not going to sign this document because I am 100% sure that you approved my time off request. I have several colleagues as witnesses, but if you want me to bring them in to discuss, I can…

**Me:** and you were not afraid?

**Maria:** No, I wasn’t afraid because if you don’t owe anything, there is no reason to fear. I was focused on the fact that I was right.

As Maria continued to describe this incident, she described herself with the Spanish common phrase “mujer de armas tomar”, which in English would translate as she is someone that you do not want to mess around with. After this difficult conversation with her supervisor, Maria began to look for the names of the other directors in the organization who could advocate
for her as she experienced this difficulty with her supervisor. Maria was able to find someone in her department who could verify the veracity of her time-off story. Fortunately, Maria’s supervisors ended up dismissing the written warning against Maria based on the work witnesses that Maria had lined up to advocate for her. Maria mentioned that she was upset at least for the next 2 days after the incident because her supervisor never apologized to her after the incident. After this incident, Maria only sent time off request in writing (via email) or posted notes. “[My supervisor] now has her wall full of my notes.”

Throughout our conversations, I noticed that Maria has tremendous courage and braveness to confront power issues and injustice. She believes that her English proficiency has helped her confront difficult situations.

Me: you commented earlier that when you have a problem with one of your supervisors, you have a way to find a solution….right?
Maria: yes.
Me: you know that if they fail to listen to your requests and are doing something unfair, you can…
Maria: report them…
Me: you are not afraid to do that?
Maria: no
Me: and what happens if they still don’t listen to you after you report the issue?
Maria: I go to the boss higher up than my boss
Me: oh, so you have the courage
Maria: yes, I am not afraid to move forward until it gets fixed
Me: do you think that other Latino or minority workers have the same courage?
Maria: no.
Me: What do they do then?
Maria: they don’t have the same courage or bravery. I think it because they don’t speak English very well

This portion of my dialogue with Maria makes me wonder if other Latino/as non-academic employees at MU can successfully navigate difficult dialogues with supervisors or colleagues who have power over them.
There have been times where Maria has felt powerless as well. A few years ago her departmental unit when through some policy changes where employees could no longer preference their specific job assignments. In the past, employees were able to preference the location, assignment, and work shift in line with job seniority or years of service. Based on this system, Maria could preference the most suitable job and time for her schedule, which is an advantage she earned through hard work and dedication.

Maria: I did not agree with this change because it did not benefit us at all.  
Me: sure, it was more rigid  
Maria: and if it favors the company, they are going to continue with the plan…which if I was the company’s owner, I would do the same  
Me: sure  
Maria: but you also have to think about your employees and there are many employees that are not married or do not have families or extra responsibilities.

Through this dialogue with Maria, one can see that there are many non-academic units of the university that function as any other private or corporate business where the premises productivity and revenue overpower human capital.

Me: Did [management] talk to you and your colleagues about this change to see what you thought? Or did they just said this is the new thing we are doing…  
Maria: well, they asked us what we thought about the change but that was not going to give us any hope. This was merely communication of information…we had no vote on this issue.  
Me: so you were not involved in the decision making process  
Maria: no, and we had to accept it because we needed the job.

Through this example, I learned about the lack of shared governance and employees’ voices within Maria’s departmental culture. I wonder if this non-academic unit would still be able to cover its staffing needs and keep their employees motivated if they are invited to actively participate in the decision making process.  

**Intersectionality: multiple identities.** Through Maria’s life events I can see the struggle for Maria between her identity as a mother, wife, and worker. As a driven woman, she carries
the pressure to be good at everything. The struggles and conflict described in Maria’s story to reunite with her daughter bring an excellent illustration of intersectionality. Maria exhibited conflict of inner identities as a mother and as a wife when she had to confront her husband and put her marriage at risk for the sake of her daughter. I think this is one of the most courageous and emancipatory moments in Maria’s life story. Here is a visceral struggle between Maria the mother, Maria the wife, and Maria the woman, all at once. The beauty of it is that this struggle shapes Maria as a stronger woman. This is a moment in Maria’s story when you find plots overlapping within plots. This is more than Maria fighting for her daughter. This is Maria fighting for the emancipation of her womanhood. This is Maria going totally against her upbringing in a machista Latino culture and confronting the power of her husband. This is one of Maria’s most rebellious actions in her life.

**Her career at MU.** Maria has worked for over 13 years in the dining services area from MU. Through much work and dedication, she moved through the ranks of her position to the maximum category of job bands within her area of expertise. Overall, Maria describes her experience working at MU as positive where she has learned to adapt quickly to different responsibilities. “Those who are good workers can find work wherever,” Maria comments as I asked her to describe her perspective on work.

In her current position, Maria is expected to do all kind of busy work or busy supervision, but she is not given decision-making power. In other words, Maria is not viewed as a stakeholder at work. She is often asked to train new employees. The new employees preferred to be trained by her because she is really good at what she does, which put hers at odds with some managers. Nevertheless, Maria’s colleagues respect her and that is important to her. On one occasion, her leadership and expertise were validated by an assistant manager.
Assistant manager (to Maria): I really enjoy working with you because I don’t have to worry about anything. I know you are very efficient and that you will have everything ready. You are always on top of things and run a very organized shift. Maria: Do you think…and please be honest with me. Do you think that if I apply to be an assistant manager, I would do a good job? Assistant manager: of course you would. I support you 100%. You have the intelligence and the capacity and you have leadership.

From Maria’s accounts I can see that she is a natural leader at work, but she has not had the opportunity to go into management. Maria has not applied to management jobs because she does not have a college degree, which appears to be a required qualification for managerial positions in her department. Her bosses often come to her for advice. In many ways Maria is already fulfilling many management responsibilities without the right title and pay.

Maria: I have always been her “right hand” (referring to her boss)…or her two arms, or her brain because I was dedicated…I had to make sure that the chefs were following the recipes, that the merchandise was ready. I had to make sure that inventory was completed. I was doing the job of an assistant manager. Me: wow. And they didn’t raise your…? Maria: they did not raise my salary…the only thing I received was… “Maria, you are a very valuable person and would be great assistant manager. “If that position ever becomes open, I would hire you.”

Maria felt that these were empty promises, and that upper management has never taken her leadership and experience seriously. Maria would like to receive new work opportunities that match the level of dedication and responsibility that she is already showing. While Maria realizes the importance of education to move up in her job, she would like to see an alternative path to management that could replace the bachelor’s or master’s educational requirements. She has noticed that there are some managers that have educational backgrounds with no relation at all to the food industry.

Maria’s education: Maria understands the importance of education in her personal life and career. Before moving to the U.S. she obtained an associate nursing degree from Mexico.
As a matter of fact, she enrolled in accelerated classes at Columbia College to finish her nursing degree and obtain a bachelor’s degree. She participated in the program for a year when she realized that she was taking coursework that she had already completed in Mexico. When she sought advice from her academic advisor, she never received a clear path for program completion. Maria was overwhelmed by all the paperwork, examinations, and ambiguity related to the revalidation of her credits earned in Mexico and the completion of her nursing studies.

Maria ended up withdrawing from the accelerated nursing program.

Maria: back then my daughter was 2 years old, and I struggled
Me: sure
Maria: because school, work, the house, the children…and I told myself, I am not going to finish this…
Me: do you know that as a university employee, you can study a degree like nursing or business and receive a 75% tuition remission?
Maria: yes, I know about this benefit
Me: Have you thought about going back to school?
Maria: Yes, I have thought about it, but I don’t want to go through the same negative experience again…and now I am more focused on my children’s future.

Maria is grateful that her job offers flexibility towards educational pursuits. When Maria attended Columbia College while work full time at MU she was able to bring homework to work. I persisted with the topic of education and asked again about a plan a return to education.

Me: So, you are not fully shutting the doors on your education?
Maria: No. I like studying!
Me: Sure, sure
Maria: I like studying, yes, I do.
Me: Of course, because I was thinking that after learning about your experience, you are the right person to continue moving up as an assistant manager, and manager, but they require a bachelor’s.

I used this emphasis on education to help Maria validate her experience as a dedicated leader.

Through our conversations about education, Maria later expressed interest in becoming a dietitian.
Entrepreneurship and the future: Maria began working when she was 12 years old and has had many years of experience working in the restaurant business both in Mexico and the U.S.. Despite her many years of labor intensive work, she has never lost the spark of creativity. Entrepreneurship is a trait that clearly emerges through Maria’s story especially when she is asked about her future plans. Maria is a strategic thinker and decision maker. A few years ago she had the opportunity to buy a bar style restaurant in Columbia. While she was excited about this opportunity, she preferred to move cautiously and conducted a thorough analysis of this potential investment. After several discussions with her husband, she came to the conclusion that this was not the right time for this investment because the restaurant was too big and right next to a gas station. She also realized that her daughter was still too little and needed her full attention.

Maria is still on the prime time of her professional career, but she is already making plans to become a restaurant business owner after her retirement.

Me: so you would like to own restaurant in the next 5 to 10 years?  
Maria: yes, my own place, small one….not too big  
Me: and you plan to still work at the university  
Maria: no, I would be gone by then. This would be after my retirement…within the next 15 years  
Me: 15 years?  
Maria: yes, this is on my mind  
Me: so you are willing to become an entrepreneur and own your business  
Maria: yes  
Me: wow, wow, I think this is great because as immigrants we quickly learn to adapt and to have a spirit of entrepreneurship.  
Maria: in my current job I have the opportunity to try new recipes. I can create new recipes quickly.

As with most immigrants, the story of Maria is a story of entrepreneurship. There is nothing more entrepreneurial than leaving all that you know back home (e.g., language, family, culture, friends, memories) to pursue success opportunities in the U.S. The resilience and
wisdom that Maria has acquired through her professional and personal journey in the U.S. has prepared her to someday become an outstanding business owner and community leader. Maria is a strong woman and very secure in her own identity. Maria has constantly rebelled against power and adversity in different areas of her life. Most importantly, Maria has successfully navigated her multiple responsibilities as worker, mother, wife, and daughter.

**Jose: Continuous Redemption**

I had met Jose earlier in my career at MU around 2009 when I worked near him on campus. I remember talking to him about the Mexican soccer league and its most valuable players. With the help of a well-connected member of the Latino community in Columbia, I was able to contact Jose and ask if he would be interested in participating in my study. Without hesitation and with much enthusiasm, Jose agreed to meet with me at a local Taco Bell to talk about his participation in my research study.

As with Maria, it was difficult to trace a perfectly linear and sequential set of events to construct Jose’s life story. As my conversation with Jose progressed, I found myself entangled in stories within stories with different characters and plots that emerged and faded as Jose unfolded his larger story. When I reflect on my time interviewing Jose, I am grateful that he gave me access to rich episodes in his life where he experienced pain, suffering, joy, and redemption. When I think of Jose’s story, I think of man who has gained much wisdom and peace through his lived experiences. Most importantly, when I think of Jose’s story, I think of a work of redemption in progress.

**The journey to the U.S.:** Jose immigrated to the United States twice. He first came to the U.S. in 1991 during his early 20s when a group of friends invited him to come work with them in a construction business. He first came to Delaware, and he only stayed in the U.S. for 2
years. He remembers that he could not do any work for the first 2 months of his stay in the U.S. because the weather was too cold to be working outside.

**Jose:** So at that time I was single and everything…and I told myself, this is my opportunity

**Me:** Sure

**Jose:** I didn’t think twice…I was an adventurer

**Me:** sure, sure…how old were you?

**Jose:** I was 24 years old around that time…24 years old

**Me:** You were young

**Jose:** Yes, very young and very immature

**Me:** ha, ha (laughter)

**Jose:** ha, ha (laughter)

As many immigrants do, Jose immigrated to the U.S. in search of better job opportunities and personal success. Money, work, and success are things that every 20-year old man wants. The U.S. is one of the few places on earth where it still possible to find all of these material attributes fast. Nevertheless, the promises of fast money and success do not make Jose forget about his roots, culture, and traditions.

**Jose:** Well, yes you know when you come to this country for the first time and you know how much you are going to earn, your mind is always thinking of the “pesos.” How much am I going to earn? Doing…the…How do you say it?

**Me:** “Doing the math”

**Jose:** Yes. Ha, ha (laughter). You tell yourself whatever I do here is business.

**Miguel:** sure, sure

**Jose:** and that’s how you get motivated…when you are ambitious, in the good sense of the word,…it is motivating.

**Me:** yes, yes

Jose: and that encouraged me to come (to the US)… but there comes a time when you realize that you have not gotten rid your roots, your culture, your traditions…this is my case. Because there are others that can do it…this was a lot of work for me, and I am always mentally attached to my country.

**Me:** ok

**Jose:** sure. Always with the intention to return home because that was always the plan when I first came (…to the US).

Jose first came to the U.S. with the plan to stay for 2 years to make money and then go back to Mexico. His immigration journey was more of an economic transaction. After 2 years
of working in the U.S., he returned to Mexico and he quickly spent the money he brought from the U.S. He found himself back in Mexico doing construction work. Through my conversations with Jose about his journey as an immigrant in the U.S., I learned about his work ethic and his perspective on child labor.

Me: So you have always had manual labor skills, construction?
Jose: Not exactly, but I was always an employee ready to work on whatever
Me: At what age did you begin working?
Jose: Well, I have to go back when I was eight years old and my mom fixed gelatin so I can sell in the street.
Me: ha, ha (laughter)
Jose: ha, ha (laughter)
Me: So ever since you were little, your mother, your father taught you the importance of work…
Jose: Well, yes, because this is part of our culture (in Mexico) you see young kids making bricks where they basically marginalize you from living a healthy life mentally and emotionally because you begin taking big responsibilities at a very young age so your mind is not ready yet.
Me: Sure
Jose: so these types of responsibilities affect you mentally later on in life…you become death emotionally. You are a paid person and you are alive, but your emotions are death because they are not matching your age and have been submitted to another system.

Jose came to the U.S. for a second time to work in an Italian restaurant in Florida 3 years after the first time he first came to the U.S. Jose’s brother played a key role in his immigration journey because he invited Jose to work at the Italian restaurant in Florida, and he also helped Jose find a job in Missouri. It is in Florida where Jose met his now wife. Jose and his wife had actually met in Mexico several years prior, but it was not until they reconnected in Florida that they began their relationship.

Jose: That’s why I first came there…so then [my brother] came to Missouri…you know, the connections, someone invites you to work…and he came [to Missouri].
Me: sure, sure
Jose: then he invited me to come here because he began to work at the Olive Garden.
Me: here in Missouri?
Jose: So he began to get involved in restaurants… and then he came and invited me to come here (to Missouri): “What’s up brother…come here brother…don’t you want to come work here?” so there, I moved to Missouri.

When Jose and his family moved to Missouri, Jose began working in the restaurant industry while his wife worked at MU. Jose managed to work for six different restaurants before his brother and his wife persuaded him to work at MU in 2005. Both Jose and his wife currently work at MU in the area of custodian services. Along with his wife, Jose settled in Columbia with three children.

The death of his father: The loss of his father when he was only 13 years old was a turning point in Jose’s life. Jose and his family were devastated by this loss. His father was only in his early 40s when he died after a long and painful battle against cancer. This traumatic loss marked the family’s life and was a long physical and emotional journey of suffering for his family. Jose’s mom was now left alone to provide care and direction to seven young children. It is through this hardship that Jose realized the importance of family and developed a personal vision for what his own family would look like in the future, often mentioning that “family is fundamental, fundamental. [We] worked as a team. We were not rich or poor, but we took care of one another,” Jose added.

Jose: … my dad died when I was 13 years old. I was very young and it was very difficult for all the family because of all of the support a father gives at that age…we experienced it that way.
Me: And how old was your dad?
Jose: 40 years old…41
Me: Young! Very young
Jose: Very young
Me: What happened to him? Did he have a heart attack? An accident?
Jose: I think it was cancer. We didn’t talk much about cancer back in the day…this was 1980s, and we didn’t talk about cancer like we do today.
Me: sure
Jose: and he was hospitalized for many years…
Me: sure, sure
Jose: Then my mother told me after some years that they were doing testing/experiments with him because they didn’t know what he had. They researched…all of this was very painful for us emotionally… so he died…and we were seven brothers that had to go to school and my mom alone. She had to work her butt off to meet our needs. And we (Jose and his brothers) had to grow up the best we could…following instructions [from my mother].

Me: sure, sure

Jose: You know…parents want the best for their kids…but that was far from what one would want…I started to hang out with the wrong crowd…and drinking alcohol.

Jose’s description of his father’s death was one of the most emotional moments of our conversation. While Jose did not cry during this segment of the interview, I noticed that he lowered the tone of his voice with several moments of silence. Jose was not ashamed to describe the raw pain that he and his family felt throughout the loss of their father. In an overly patriarchal Latin American culture in which Jose grew up, the loss of the father is the loss of the head of the family. Certainly, this was a defining moment in Jose’s life. Not only Jose had lost the most important male figure in his life, but he now also had to assume adult responsibilities and provide for his mother and siblings.

Jose’s mother & the fight against addiction. After the painful death of his father, Jose’s mother became a stronger figure in his life. Jose’s mother had the daunting responsibility of raising eight children on her own. Jose’s mother was a realtor while his father was a tailor. Jose’s remember that his family would constantly experience financial high and lows depending on his parents’ work season. Jose remembered that his mother worked so much that she would not have time to help him and his brothers and sisters with school homework. However, she always made sure that they went to school, and that they had all school supplies.

Jose: we were not rich or poor but we always had what we needed, but it was team work…everyone working as a team as a family…My mother was very “luchona” (a warrior)…we were eight brothers..

Me: wow
Jose: Two boys and six girls, but we all grew up with my mom’s ideas. My mom was a very “luchadora” (a fighter) like many Latina women, and she instilled a work ethic on us since we were little…and also with school…my mom understood the importance of education.

While Jose grew up in a patriarchal Latin American culture, it is important to notice the special bond that he developed with his mother. Jose described his mother as a *luchadora* or *luchona* which are Spanish terms that entail courage, determination, resilience, etc. Jose admired the strength of her mother to pull the family together in the midst of the tragic loss of their father. It should be noted that traditionally in Latin America, mothers are considered “sacred” by their sons. Even after marriage, sons tend to have close relationships with their mothers where mothers continue to “mother” their sons by cooking special foods or taking care of mundane errands for them. Some would argue that the Roman Catholic influence created a cultural connection between the Virgin Mary and Latina women where mothers are “venerated” by their sons.

As a result of his father’s death, Jose started doing drugs, drinking alcohol, and hanging out with the wrong crowds through his teenage years. Alcohol and substance addiction seems to have been an ongoing struggled in Jose’s life. When he came to the U.S. the first time, he was still battling addiction symptoms.

Jose: So when all this process of high and lows…and this was before I came here (the US)...until I received the invitation to come to the US…and I came…but I continued with the “andadas” (making bad choices) but it wasn’t as bad as before…because it is different to come back home to your mother that can support you than a place where if you don’t work, you don’t eat… because they are not your blood…as it should be. So these experiences opened my mind and helped me focus...

Jose has a special connection to his mother because she was the force behind his drug and alcohol successful rehabilitation. One can learn more about the special bond between Jose and his mother from the interview piece below:
Me: Who helped you during your battle with addiction? Your family? Friends?
Jose: my mother was the most interested
Me: your mother?
Jose: my mother never left...she was always there for me...because she feared that I was doing this out of ignorance, but I thought I was doing it because I wanted it and that’s how I enjoyed life...but it was part of my ignorance...to do something that would give me pleasure without understanding the consequences of it.
Me: Sure, sure
Jose: So she never left me and thanks to her I met this group (rehabilitation).

Through the lines above one can observe Jose’s gratitude towards his mother for being there for him during his biggest life crisis. This was a very humbling moment for Jose during his interview as he described a time where he was most vulnerable and crippled by addiction. A grown up man in his 20s needed the intervention of his mother to help him turn his life around. Although this episode occurred close to 20 years ago, Jose continues to praise his mother for the key role that she played in his life.

The experience of coming to the U.S. as an immigrant also helped Jose develop some sense of self-control and personal responsibility as he battled with addiction.

Jose: So that’s how I came...I put much effort and then I returned to Mexico, but then you have this...like an alcoholic...you can control the disease, but you can cure it...This, when you first come to the U.S. if you are not doing so well, you mind will always be floating on the idea to come back home...And that’s what happened. I told myself that I would return home as soon as the opportunity arises “I will come home, come home, come home...and then I returned home.. So when I came to the US for the second time, I still had in mind the idea to return to Mexico

Alcoholism is a big problem in Mexico and most of Latin America. It must have been quite difficult for Jose to stay sober where the cultural expectation for working men is to work hard during the week and drink hard during the weekends. The battle against addiction becomes even harder for immigrants when they are isolated from their family, friends, and other support networks.
As Jose embarked in a long journey for recovery he found that reading played a key role in his healing process.

**Me:** do you like to read?
**Jose:** A lot...yes, I like to read a lot:
**Me:** sure, sure
**Jose:** because I learned that when you read a book you can save yourself 10 years of experiences that you don’t have to live yourself....if you open your mind through a book....that is the purpose of a book....that the experiences someone already lived (went through) you don’t have to repeat them if they are not for good. And if you have dreams to fulfill, it (the book) tells you how you do it the short way and you don’t waste your time...Because there is a point in life when you realize you no longer have physical and mental strength...that’s when you come...If I had....but this “if I had to” is past ....and I don’t want to come to that point (point of regret).

I had not realized Jose’s strong intellectual curiosity until he described his love for reading. I would think that keeping his mind engaged in intellectual affairs would be a good tool to fight against his addictions. In Jose’s current position as a custodian, he does not have many opportunities to exercise his mind to process information and think critically. Having worked as a janitor throughout my entire college career, I can attest that these types of jobs can be draining for the mind and spirit unless there are opportunities to engage in critical thinking and problem solving. It would be good to see if MU wellness program offers support programs for employees that are recovering from substance addictions.

Jose is now 18 years sober, but he knew he had to “hit bottom” before beginning his road to recovery. As Jose reflects back on this period of his life, he realizes that turning to alcohol and drugs was a bad decision. Later on in our conversation, Jose talked about how he does not want his children to be exposed to the same dangers he did when he was a kid.

**His faith.** Through our conversations, Jose demonstrated self-awareness of his spirituality and the role he thinks God plays in his life. Jose clearly sees a divine intervention through the times of crisis in his life.
Me: And through all your life and death experiences, through your immigration journey, through your struggle with drugs and alcohol, did you ever see the role of God, faith, or religion in your life? Or not?
Jose: Yes, because of the Alcohol Anonymous programs I participated in, I have always believed in God
Me: Sure
Jose: but I believed in God on my own terms…according to what was convenient for me
Me: Yes, yes, yes
Jose: I mean, not a God like it ought to be…right?
Me: Yes, yes, yes
Jose: (my belief) It was always based in “God, give me this; God, give me the other.”

Jose commented that his view of God evolved as he got to learn more about religion.

Jose: When I grew in my understanding of God I had to admit that I didn’t fully know who God was, but I had to learn. I discovered that I like religion a lot. I like talking about religion.
Me: Sure, sure
Jose: I like to get involved too and read the Bible…I am more interested in religion because I am now aware of the influence of God in my life.
Me: Sure, sure
Jose: I can’t move without him

Jose believes that ever since he got closer to God, he changed bad habits and even his relationship with colleagues at work has improved: “People are now attracted to me. They want to work with me now….”

Leadership. Through my conversations with Jose, I noticed that he exhibits a passion for leadership. Jose was first exposed to the idea of leadership through his military background, which has deeply shaped his identity.

Jose: I consider myself a leader… and I have a story… a story of leadership
Me: Oh
Jose: I was in the military
Me: in the military?
Jose: I was a soldier, a marine, policeman, supervisor, security agent, I trained people…
Me: Oh, when was this
Jose: this was before I came to the US, the second time
Me: Sure, sure
Jose: but I started from the bottom of the ranks…I have always had the ambition to grow
Me: Sure, sure
Jose: but I realized that I couldn’t achieve it because I didn’t know how
Me: oh
Jose: But I always grew up with the goal of “being someone” but I didn’t know how to get there…
Me: but you have training, the military mentality
Jose: oh, yes…I have discipline, I have a very rigid discipline…which is the “militia”
Me: so this was an advantage because there is many people that don’t have that kind of training
Jose: well, I am very disciplined…exaggeratedly disciplined….you can imagine how a military guy is..
Me: sure, sure (laughing)
Jose: I was also a security guard
Me: security guard
Jose: and not only that…I was an instructor…I would train people to be guards
Me: oh, you were an instructor!
Jose: I was also a supervisor…
Me: oh
Jose: so for many years I have been involved with being disciplined…because if there is no discipline in what you would like to do, you won’t accomplish anything.

Jose strongly believes that patience and humility have helped him become a better leader.

Through his time in the U.S. and after overcoming personal struggles, I feel that Jose learned that leadership is more focused on sacrificial service than a hierarchical position.

Jose: You have to have the gift of patience too because when you are impulsive…
Me: Yes
Jose: if you are not patient, you cannot have power as a leader
Me: sure, sure
Jose: You have to be patient, you have to be patient…and realistic with life…and humility because without it you cannot achieve anything.

Working at MU: When I asked Jose about his experience working at MU, he had very positive comments to share. Jose began working at MU in 2005 following the footsteps of his brother and his wife. With over 10 years of work at the university, Jose feels that the university environment has had a positive influence in his life. Most importantly, he feels blessed to have the opportunity to work directly with college students. Important topics such as power, leadership, and career growth emerged as Jose described his experiences related to his work at MU.
Me: so how has your experience working at the university been? Good? Bad?
Jose: It has been very good. Because I came to a place where I did not know what I was getting into
Me: oh really?
Jose: And I am going to tell you why…to work at a place with a high level of education has significantly helped my personal improvement
Me: oh
Jose: Even though I am not a student, I am worker…but to have that close contact with students and their lives… and I am a very receptive person

While Jose’s experience working as a custodian for MU has been positive, he has also had some hardships. In his current job, Jose cleans apartments and provides maintenance of students’ public spaces. Jose is also in charge of giving maintenance to carpets and floors. Jose comes from a military background where he had the opportunity to supervise and train younger officers. In his role as a custodian, he had difficulty feeling powerless or lacking a formal leadership role, and he did not want to receive orders from people with less knowledge.

Me: So how has the relationship with your colleagues been?
Jose: Ha, ha (laughter). Difficult, very difficult (emphasized Jose)
Me: Why?
Jose: Well, at the beginning when I first came I was going through an ego phase. Me: Sure, sure…
Jose: It was very difficult to adjust…very difficult…because I come from Mexico with a supervisory level of leadership.
Me: And your military experience too..
Jose: Exactly! That’s why it was difficult for me to adjust to my jobs…not only there [at MU], but in all other jobs…because I carried with me the idea of giving orders, telling people what to do, looking for things…
Me: you wanted to the boss…sure that’s ok…that normal…
Jose: so it was something that got used to for many years and I wasn’t going to be easy to put it aside…it becomes part of your personality…so your ego doesn’t allow you to have a person with less knowledge or new to tell you how things need to be done…so you are now checking how is this person asking you to do things or how this person talk to you….because it goes beyond receiving order, but how they instruct/give orders…
Me: sure, sure
Jose: so you do a study that determines if this person is capable of giving you orders or not. You are in your own world and you study and make your own assessment. You don’t care that you are just an employee. You always wear your supervisor, your “leader” hat. And this attitude brought me many problems because I was acting this way at work.
Me: oh, oh
**Jose:** I even got into fistfights with “gabachos” (colloquial term for White Americans) in the restaurants

Jose admits that pride and ego for not having a supervisor role brought him many problems at work. He commented that reading self-improvement books and getting involved with self-improvement conferences help him change. These self-improvement resources helped him develop patience and humility.

**Me:** So what happened for you to change?

**Jose:** Well, I started to get involved with…although I had already had some knowledge/concepts of self-improvement…but then I started working for a natural products company.

**Me:** Like Herbalife (natural products company)?

**Jose:** yes…something like that… but the conferences that they have…we had to go to conferences….we had to instruct ourselves as people to be able to reach out to people….because if you don’t do it yourself…they are going to realize your interest/agenda…the goals you have if you don’t know how to focus on them and articulate them before people….because people are going to be your resources…

Because of this ego and pride, he also had some difficult relationships with his supervisors at first. Jose supervisors respect him, and he finds joy in it. Jose’s supervisors know that he doesn’t gossip and he get the job done. They have written great recommendation letter for him, and they see his attributes as a person.

**Jose:** So I have asked them (supervisors) for recommendation letters in the past and your heart would feel touched after you read these letters.

**Me:** so you have had supervisors that have written letters on your behalf?

**Jose:** yes, yes I have requested recommendation letters in the past for situations that where I needed them

**Me:** sure, sure

**Jose:** “And not only I recommend Jose, but if there were half of people like Jose in the US, this would be a different world.”

Through his time at MU, Jose had developed a strong desire to mentor new employees. When is asked him to share a word of advice to new Latino/a employees in his area, he said:
Jose: I would suggest that they follow the rules, that they think before they speak, that they seek reason, and that whether they are right or wrong to be cautious when speaking because they don’t want to be known as “difficult people”…
Me: Sure
Jose: Because the higher ups are going to analyze the issues in a different way and they are going to come to the conclusion that they are not good workers. I would also tell the new employees to avoid quarrels with others.
Me: Sure
Jose: Be a quiet person, calm, only say things that you are supposed to say. Don’t get into situations where others can manipulate your words

As Jose mentions above, Latinos/as at a predominantly White institution do not have the luxury of being known as “difficult people” or to be too opinionated or expressive because this could hurt their employment status. In other words, Jose is advising new employees to mind their own business and to bring little attention to themselves so things would go well for them.

Career. Jose does not want to move up in his current position at MU because he would prefer to start his own construction business. Jose believes that his leadership style would not be a good fit for the university setting because he is a driven leader who makes quick decisions, implying that it takes too long to make decisions at MU. Thus, Jose does not believe that he would be a good supervisor for people in the university environment. When I asked him about the opportunity to complete his bachelor’s degree at MU through the employee tuition reimbursement program, he told me that he was more interested in gaining more hands-on “do it yourself” type of skills. As a matter of fact, Jose has already developed a construction side job for the weekends where he provides maintenance services for an apartment complex. He first approached this construction job as a way to make extra cash, but he is now developing a business plan that he can use to make it a larger business in the future.

As I learned from my conversation with Jose, he believes that his life is a story of transformation. He has positively influenced others, has talked to young teenagers about the
dangers of alcohol and drugs. He has even saved marriages! Through my conversations with Jose, I discovered a man with much wisdom and contentment with his life and past. He tells me that he has so much more to say.

**Common Themes**

Both Maria and Jose were asked the same set of semi-structured questions, yet my interview with Jose was much shorter in time. Nevertheless, I obtained a total of 51 themes when I talked to Jose while I obtained 43 themes when I interviewed Maria. With their own set of differences, my time with Maria and Jose gave me a privileged spot to gain a more intimate knowledge of the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU. These fascinating stories do indeed tell me that there is much work to do. Through the use of an intersectionality lens in the analysis of these narratives, there are recurring themes that emerged through Maria and Jose’s stories that are worth exploring.

**Identity Conflicts**

Maria and Jose were often being pulled in different directions by competing interests. Maria would often find herself having to choose between her work responsibilities and personal time with her family. Maria also had to battle with identity issues at home between her role as a wife and her role as a mother. It is noteworthy to see that Maria developed an emancipatory way to do things and develop her own identity as a woman where she successfully confronted power structures of machismo and hierarchy at home and at work. On the one hand, when I think of Maria, I think of a courageous woman with a powerful story of resilience who overcame several hardships to take care of her loves ones and to improve herself. On the other hand, Jose is a hard-working and ambitious man who would often struggle between his identities as a former military leader and his identity as a father and husband. Jose has gained much wisdom and
contentment through his life, was able to profit from poor past choices, and is now willing to
invest his time mentoring younger leaders.

**The Latino/a Glass Ceiling**

While Jose and Maria have both been at MU for more than 10 years and bring a wealth of
rich experiences to our campus, they have had limited opportunities for professional growth, and
they have been discouraged from pursuing career growth at MU. In Maria’s case it is the lack of
a bachelor’s degree that has hindered her development as a manager in her unit. For Jose, his
previous military experience has narrowed his view of leadership where he only sees a leadership
as a hierarchical position to be applied in the work environment. Under the current system of
career development and promotion in the units that they work, Maria and Jose would retire with
no chance of ever moving up their organization’s hierarchy into management positions. In my
conversations with Maria, we were able to co-construct the glass ceiling that she faces at work.

Me: and the opportunities out there require of people like you that have the tenacity to
avoid giving up. But even if you have tenacity, if there are limited opportunities, you are
going to hit a ceiling. Do you understand?

Maria: yes, without a way out

Me: yes, without a way out. So, we have to break that ceiling!

**Professional Development: Conflict Resolution**

Maria and Jose are resilient leaders with many positive attributes, but through my
conversations with them I noticed that they lacked training and experience to successfully
resolve difficult dialogues and situations. While Maria tore recipes in her managers’ faces after
some arguments, Jose would escalate conflicts to the point of fistfights with co-workers. MU
offers some free professional development sessions for employees but it would be useful to know
if the units where Maria and Jose work genuinely support their participation in these professional
development sessions. From my conversations with Jose and Maria, I learned that their departments would announce some professional development events merely as a “check the box” effort rather than a department wide culture. From my conversations with Maria and Jose it seemed to me that Maria’s department was more flexible with attendance to professional development functions. I recently volunteered as proctor of the newly released campus diversity climate survey for Latino/a workers in non-academic areas, and no Latino/a employees showed up to take the survey. This suggests that the immediate supervisors of these non-academic employees are either not supportive or have not effectively articulated the importance of participating in professional development activities. Training in the use of Outlook email communication and Outlook Calendar would also help them become more organized at work and more engaged with what is going on in the University community.

**Challenging Power**

Maria and Jose had different approaches in dealing with power struggles. Through Maria’s story we can see several vivid examples of her style of addressing perceived injustices from supervisors or others. Maria has the habit of confronting power struggles head on while Jose would recommend avoiding power struggles issues and “minding your own business” at work. Some would argue that one approach to deal with power was better than the other, but I wonder if it would help to empower workers like Maria and Jose with negotiation skills where they can respectfully and effectively bargain for what they feel is important in the workplace. While Jose and Maria work in vulnerable para-professional non–academic positions, I wonder if they realize the power that a collective constructive voice can bring to their workplace. This could be an area where institutional sponsored entities such as the newly formed Division of
Diversity and Inclusion as well as MU Voz Latina (Ex-Hispanic Latin American Faculty & Staff Association) can provide leadership and guidance.

“La Familia: Lo Mas Importante.”

Through my conversations with Jose and Maria, I quickly learned of their visceral love and dedication for their families. In their own ways, Jose and Maria lived out their respect and gratitude towards their families. Through their stories, one can see that their notion of family extended beyond the father, mother, brother traditional nucleus to also include extended family. In both Jose and Maria’s stories there was a clear trajectory between job mobility and family connections. Both Jose and Maria used the help of family to find new jobs and to settle in a new geographical region. Further, one can see that in times of hardship, their families tightened up and formed strong support network to deal with personal tragedy, deaths, suffering, separation, and addictions.

Racism at MU

The university went through a major racially-based crisis last November, 2015 that made national news and disrupted the leadership core within the university administration. However, this crisis did not seem to have reached the underworld of non-academic employees with the same level of impact as the academic world. Both Jose and Maria were aware of the November 2015 crisis, but to them this crisis was nothing new. Jose and Maria have experienced racism in their work place, and they affirm that racism does exist on campus. When I mentioned this topic to Maria, she said that she had never experienced racism until she came to the U.S. On the other hand, Jose believes that racism exists because “there are ignorant people everywhere.” Maria and Jose’s reaction to the November 2015 incidents tells me that there is a big disconnect between the MU academic and the non-academic labor intensive world. We have had daily
racial crises in our own back yard since the university was created but apparently this only becomes newsworthy when it affects the academic world.

**Summary and Point of the Stories**

The central question of this study is: what are the life histories of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU and do issues of identity, power, and hierarchy emerge within those testimonios? One secondary question is: Do Latino/a non-academic employees have a sense of agency in their role on campus or within the larger campus community? Using an intersectionality framework of analysis, this chapter presented the lived experiences and personal narratives of Jose and Maria within the context of the study research questions. The focus of this chapter was to capture what Jose and Maria said; how they said it, and when they said it. While there were several common themes in both Maria and Jose’s accounts, they both had unique and complex nuances about their identities and experiences. Here we see the accounts of two intrepid immigrants who had to fight against internal and external adversities to accomplish their goals. While following a chronological order was not the main purpose of this analysis, it is interesting to see the beginning, middle, and end with which each participant chose to narrate their story.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION

As discussed through these chapters, Latinos/as represent a key minority population segment in the U.S. and are among the fastest growing populations in the nation (Krogstad, 2014; Nuñez 2014; Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). Despite the national population growth Latino/as are underrepresented and understudied in the field of higher education (Carter; 2013; Delgado-Romero, Manlove, Manlove, Hernandez, 2007; DeLuca & Escoto, 2012; Flores & Garcia 2009; Huber & Cueva, 2012; Verdugo, 2003). Therefore, the goal of this qualitative study was to describe the importance of knowing and understanding the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU to better inform administrators on the work experiences of Latinos/as in higher education (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012, Gracia 2008; Rodriguez, 2008). In this chapter, I will discuss a summary of the key findings, as well as present implications for future research and practice.

Summary and Discussion of Key Findings

This study focused on understanding the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU, a predominantly White institution. The data for this study were collected via semi-structured interview questions. The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the life histories of Latino/a non-academic employees at MU and do issues of identity, power, and hierarchy emerge within those testimonios?

2. What opportunities for professional and educational advancement do Latino/a non-academic employees have at MU?

In this section, I will provide a summary of the key findings for each of the two research questions.
Identity

My study participants Jose and Maria dealt with myriad identity struggles inside and outside the university. While each of them has been in the U.S. for over a decade, they still feel like “outsiders” within the larger community. Jose struggled with his identity as a leader because he associated leadership with hierarchy and he felt leaderless in his current jobs as a custodian. Jose’s view of leadership was co-constructed by his up-bringing in a historically machista former role in the Mexican military where he had supervision authority over people. I also noticed an identity struggle between Jose’s old self and new self. Jose has fought a long battle against drugs and alcohol addiction and, despite his 18 years of being clean, he is aware of his daily battle to maintain his sobriety. I also found a work-related identity strength in Jose. During our conversations about his vocation and work history, he described himself as a 1,000 oficios man, which is a man of 1,000 jobs. The 1,000 oficios illustration means that Jose did not have a problem to roll up his sleeves and get whatever job needed to get done in order to provide for his family. From the military to the restaurants business to construction and custodian work, Jose adapted to different work roles.

Maria struggled with her competing identities as a mother, a worker, a wife, and a student. During our conversations, Maria shared multiple examples where she was forced to choose between her work responsibilities versus the needs of her children. On other occasions, Maria had to choose between her role as a mother versus her role as a wife. Whether by her own expectations or the pressure of others, Maria was expected to be perfect at all of those roles. One of the most challenging times in Maria’s life was when she enrolled as part-time student in Columbia College to finish her nursing degree. During this time, Maria had to juggle the
responsibilities of full time work, motherhood, marriage, and being a student. Nevertheless, Maria had her priorities straight and above all she felt secure in her identity as an independent woman who happened to be a great worker, mother, wife, and student.

In terms of belonging to the larger campus community, I notice a sense of disenfranchisement in both Jose and Maria’s journey. From my experience working at MU, most faculty and staff in have a sense of belonging in the academic community because of the proximity to students, parents and the “front of the store” type of interaction with the public. There are also several social and professional development events on campus catered to the “insiders” in the academic culture. It seemed to me that Jose and Maria viewed the university as merely their place of employment and had more of a transactional relationship with the university. I do not think that this happens because Jose and Maria lack appreciation for the university, but this happens because non-academic employees are often secluded in an underworld of busy an unappreciated work where they become invisible and voiceless to the large university community. I could also see Jose and Maria’s detachment from the larger university community as we discussed the November 2015 racial crisis. Both Jose and Maria showed no surprise when we discussed the November 2015 racial crisis at MU, as in their non-academic underworld this is a daily crisis. This lack of agency between Latino/a non-academic and the larger campus culture might also be caused because most campus intra-communication and opportunities for involvement are announced via email and Latino/a employees working in labor intensive positions have very limited access to email communication.

**Power and Hierarchy**

Power and hierarchy are also two keys themes that emerged from my conversations with Jose and Maria. For Jose power was directly related to hierarchy. The time in his life when he
felt most powerful was when he worked for the military and supervised a team. Jose’s view of power drastically changed after a long and humbling journey of addiction rehabilitation. It is through this journey of recovery that Jose connected to faith and spiritual world to adopt a view of power and leadership more service oriented and less hierarchical. Through his rehabilitation journey, Jose learned to be a better reader, listener, and ultimately developed a heart to mentor new Latino/a employees and teenagers. Through his walk of addiction recovery, Jose also developed the personal power of inner strength, discipline, and resilience to complete different goals in his life.

Maria also had to deal with power and hierarchy dynamics in her life. Maria was well aware of power and hierarchy dynamics in her work and personal life. Through my conversations with Maria, I was impressed to see her courage and determination to challenge power whenever it got on the way of its professional or personal goals. Through her confrontations against power, Maria developed the capacity to rebel against adverse situations. As a woman growing up in a machista and patriarchal traditional Mexican culture, Maria had to fight against family and society expectations that expected her to confine her scope of work and leadership to the household. At a young age Maria had to address the power of addiction in her family and avoid co-dependence and also to get out of a cycle of violence. She also dealt with power and hierarchy in her marriage when she confronted her husband to defend her relationship with her daughter.

Maria also confronted power at work and challenged some of her supervisors for unfair decisions. While it appears that both Maria and Jose found basic levels of respect and civility working at MU, they find power and hierarchy hurdles when they try to advance in their career or when they speak up against work issues. It is also interesting to see the contrast on how Maria
and Jose dealt with power and hierarchy struggles at work. Jose would prefer to mind his own business, stay quiet, and fulfill his career aspirations through a construction side job. In contrast, Maria chose to confront power and hierarchy head on. Maria confronted supervisors and others above her with no remorse and no fear of consequences. I think Maria gained strength to confront power and hierarchy in her life from her strong work ethic and tenacity to rebel against difficulty.

**Contribution to the Literature**

This study significantly contributes to the very limited research that is available on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees in higher education. Most of the related research referred to in the literature review of this study focused on the experiences of Latino/a faculty and students in higher education. This research studies has also helped bring new knowledge in the methodological use of intersectionality and the discussion of power and hierarchy dynamics in higher education. This research study ultimately attempted to generate new knowledge about the professional, educational, and personal journeys of traditionally marginalized workers. This section will connect my findings to the literature on the experiences of Latinos/as in higher education.

**Latino/a Demographics and Immigration Trends**

Both of my study participants are foreign-born Latinos/as from Mexico. They immigrated to the U.S. in search for the so called “American dream” with the promise of job opportunities, financial stability, and personal success (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Kochhar, 2014). My participants came to the U.S. as single individuals on their 20s and then stayed for work and developed their own families. Jose and Maria’s stories provide an illustration of what motivates other Latino/a immigrants to come to the U.S.
Diversity climate for Latinos/as in the US. As the presence of Latinos/as has increased in the US population, resistance to Latinos’ incorporation to society has intensified (Frey, 2010; Nuñez, 2014). With the recent results of the U.S. presidential elections, the anti-immigrant rhetoric and hate speech has escalated in the nation. Both my participants reported that they have noticed racism at the MU campus. Maria said she had never experienced racism until she moved to the U.S. Maria had an incident where a White co-worker was sabotaging her cooking recipes because of the dark color of her skin. Jose did not describe a specific act of racism against him, but he did affirm that there is ignorance based racism on campus. Jose and Maria’s experiences of racism in a predominantly White institution such as MU can shed light into what the experiences of Latinos/as are like in similar peer universities.

Latinos/as in Missouri. Recent U.S. Census figures demonstrate that the percentage of Latinos/as in the state of Missouri is continuously increasing each year, becoming an increasingly important sector of Missouri’s population (Alianzas, 2014; Excelencia 2010). Latinos/as in Missouri work in production, transportation, sales or offices, but they are also business owners (Idelfonso, 2012). Latinos/as are also present in farms, factories, universities, business, and politics, and step-by-step, they are working on the social assimilation process of Missouri society (Idelfonso, 2012). Virtually, all research of Latinos/as in Missouri is centered in farming and agriculture. This study has contributed to study the experiences of a different segment of the Latino/a population in Missouri: Latinos/as in non-academic positions living in urban areas.

The Emerging Latino Workforce

In 2012 Latinos/as represented 16% of the U.S. labor force at nearly 25 million workers, and by 2018, Latinos/as will comprise 18% of the labor force (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012;
Latinos/as have historically had a strong presence in blue-collar industries and were significantly overrepresented in lower paying service occupations in 2013 as they represented 50% of agricultural workers, 45% of grounds maintenance workers, and 44% of housekeeping workers (Rodriguez, 2012; Santiago, Galdeano, Taylor, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor 2012). As most Latino/a immigrants in this country, Jose and Maria have established their careers in labor intensive service industry, which in consistent the macro-level statistics of Latino/a employment in the U.S.

**Latinos: Moving and Relocation.** Latinos/as tend to move within states and counties, indicating they are more likely to move for employment opportunities (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012). Studies have also found that the employment of Latinos/as is particularly sensitive to the density of jobs held by other Latinos/as (Hellersterin & Neumark, 2009). This correlation suggests that networks may play a key role for Latinos/as (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; Hellersterin & Neumark, 2009). The employment and relocation trajectory of my participants confirmed the national tendencies of Latinos/as to relocate base on job opportunities and networks. Maria moved to Missouri from California because her brother invited her to work with him. Jose moved to Missouri from Florida because his brother committed to help him find employment. Maria and Jose did not hesitate to pack up and move their families to Missouri whenever the opportunity and the family networks emerged. Most importantly, Jose and Maria are members of the largest concentration of Latinos/as at MU. Thus, this study offers further evidence that the power of the Latino/a network in employment opportunities and relocation is worth studying.

**Latino Workforce and the Educational Disconnect**

Latinos/as in the labor force have lower levels of degree attainment compared to other groups and are heavily concentrated in certain industries and sectors (Cardernas & Kerby, 2012;
Santiago, Galdeano, Taylor, 2015). Of those in the labor force, only 18% of Latinos/as earned a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to Asians (59%), Whites (37%), and African Americans (27%) (Cardenas & Kerby, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). To help Latinos/as overcome the blue collar ceiling, education must be recognized as the primary means to strengthen human capital (Santiago, Galdeano, Taylor, 2015). Through this study, I learned that the national trends of Latino/a career advancement and lower degree educational attainment are consistent with the experiences of the participants in this study.

Both Jose and Maria had a desire to grow in their careers at MU, but they both hit the career glass ceiling. Jose had not finished high school in Mexico, and Maria completed an associate’s degree. Maria has actively sought opportunities for advancement to management in her job at MU, but she has not been able to move up because of her lack of a 4-year college degree. Whenever she has been interested to apply to management positions, she has been discouraged from it because of her lack of a college degree. Maria is a skilled and dedicated employee who has climbed the ladder to the maximum level of her job category, but she has no more room to grow. Jose has given up and is not even trying to move up within his job category. It is ironic that a key segment of employees (labor intensive employees) at a place of higher learning such as MU do not have an adequate program to access educational opportunities. For example, while MU employees with a 75% of tuition remission; it is still a significant financial commitment to covert the remaining 25% of tuition fees, which does not include the cost of books. This is a problem that ought to be explored in higher education research.

The MU Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity; MU Extension; and academic units should consider the creation of versatile academic programs centered in the professional development on non-academic employees. These programs can include a variety of academic
and on-academic competencies and metrics to track the progress of employees. Employees like Jose could benefit from the Mizzou K12 online accelerated high school completion programs focused on adult learners. On the other hand, employees like Maria could benefit from a 3+2 program leading to bachelor’s and or master’s degrees completion or from one of the online nursing programs at MU. During the first 3 years of the programs, employees can work fulltime for a particular labor academic unit and rotate assignments every year to provide an opportunity for cross-training. The first three years of the program could count for internship or co-op credit. During the second part of the program, employees can take regular course work or quarterly modules either in person or online during the evenings or weekends. The curriculum for these programs would need to be customized in such a way that it effectively adapts to non-traditional adult learners. These non-academic units can provide paid and non-paid incentives to employees that participate in these programs.

**Intersectionality Research in Higher Education**

Intersectionality has been useful in higher education empirical research to guide the examination of the role of multiple identities and associated systems of power, privilege, and oppression in the experiences of higher education members (Renn & Reason, 2013). So far studies of higher education institutional power dynamics have addressed how power dynamics shape faculty and students’ opportunities, but more insights are needed to inform how power dynamics such as institutionalized racism or patriarchy shape the work experiences of Latino/a non-academic labor in higher education (Harper, 2012; Hart, 2006; Nuñez, 2014). Thus, this study has contributed to intersectionality research in higher education by adding a key population segment as unit of study: marginalized Latino/a non-academic employees at a predominantly White institution.
This qualitative study has contributed to a more holistic and multidimensional understanding of the identity (Harper, 2011) and lived experiences of Latinos/as working in non-academic positions in higher education. Jose and Maria juggle their identities as parents, workers, entrepreneurs, and members of close knit Latino/a family units. The rich descriptions of their lives experiences show the complexity of navigating their professional and personal lives with overlapping and competing identities. At times, Maria is an independent woman who is on a mission to succeed and move up in her career. Other times Maria is a concerned mother that shows up to the principal’s office at her daughter school to make sure that she does not get bullied in the bus. Jose is a responsible employee who minds his own business and avoids conflict and gossip at his university job. He is an entrepreneur who has developed his own weekend construction and repair business.

In many ways, research focusing on the unique experiences of individuals who belong to two or more social groups (e.g., non-Catholic Latinos/as) is still in its infancy in the field of higher education (Harper, 2011; Museus & Griffin, 2011). For instance, Jose and Maria are both foreign-born Mexican immigrants who share a working class background, but have very nuanced and unique individual stories particularly on how they experience faith and religion. “I grew up in a very strong Catholic family, but I know don’t consider myself or belonging to any religious groups anymore. Catholicism is not a religion that favors me as woman” Maria commented during our interviews. Jose and Maria also grew up in a culture with a strong Roman Catholic culture yet each has a different way to express their spirituality or lack thereof. Jose reads his Bible daily and is aware of God daily providence while Maria has a negative perception of institutionalized religion and the submissive role that it imposes to woman. The dynamics of
leadership roles and gender expectations imposed by religious and faith affiliations in religious and secular universities would be an interesting topic to study within higher education research.

Historically there has been a lack of specification of the concept of power in higher education scholarship that go beyond race issues. Most research on power struggles in the workplace appears in sociology journals (Stainback, Ratliff, & Roscigno, 2011). Thus, this study has also contributed to exploring issues of gender differences in higher education hierarchy based power struggles. As seen in the findings of this study, Jose and Maria had different ways to confront power dynamics at work and in their personal lives. While Jose would use a “pick your battles” approach to handle conflict, Maria did not hesitate to address every single episode of oppression that would come her way. The differences in their approach to confront power can be explained by the fact that both grew up in a machista and patriarchal Mexican culture. For instance, Jose could choose when to confront power because as a man in a machista culture, he did not have constantly deal with micro-aggressions related to gender. In the context of a machista culture Jose had a more positive outlook and more opportunities to succeed than Maria. In other words, Jose grew up in a culture with male privilege. On the other hand, Maria may come across as more combative in dealing with power than Jose because she grew up in a male dominated culture where she constantly had to “prove herself.” Thus, this study also contributes by providing a nuanced analysis of masculine versus feminine power struggles within a context outside of the U.S. This study also contributed by describing other identity nuances traditionally not studied by intersectionality research in higher education such as marriage relationships, spirituality, fatherhood, and motherhood.

This study has contributed to the existing intersectionality literature that emphasizes the socioeconomic and international dimensions of intersectionality (McCall, 2005). Specifically,
this study has contributed to develop a better understanding on why Mexican immigrants come
to the U.S. and how they end up working in non-academic labor intensive jobs at universities.
Both Jose and Maria are Mexican immigrants who decided to move to the U.S. in search of
better opportunities to succeed. Jose migrated to the U.S. with a focus in finding jobs and
making money while Maria came to the U.S. to reach her educational goals. Jose and Maria
were able to settle within their jobs and local communities because of the strong family networks
that they had in Missouri. Thus, family ties are one of the most powerful tools of recruitment
and retention for Latino/a workforce talent.

Despite the emergence of intersectionality as a major research framework in women’s
studies and other related fields, there has been little discussion on how to actually study and
apply intersectionality as a methodology of research (McCall, 2005). This study has contributed
to higher education scholarship is the tracing of methodological guidelines for the use of
intersectionality in research. Specifically, I used a thematic and structural analysis approach
simultaneously coding data where I paid attention to what was said, how many times it was said,
how it was said, and even what was not said. While I did count how many times topics were
repeated, I ultimately chose to focus on themes that more closely related to intersectionality
tenants such as power, identity, and hierarchy.

This combined approach of data analysis allowed me to capture the stories of my
participants in a chronological order and hear the intersectionality of voices represented within
each story.
Implications for Research

There is a significant research gap in the experiences of Latino/as in higher education. While this study has contributed to narrow this gap in research, there is additional body of knowledge left to unveil before attaining an advanced level of scholarship about Latinos/as in higher education. There is also a general lack of knowledge of the experience of non-academic employees in higher education specifically to Latinos/as in non-academic managerial, clerical, fiscal, and service/maintenance areas. This section will outline some suggested areas of where future researchers may want to focus their efforts.

Latinos/as in Non-Academic Positions

Peter Magolda (2016) has significantly contributed to expand the scope of higher education research with his book *The Lives of Campus Custodians: Insights into Corporization and Civic Disengagement in the Academy*. While Magolda’s study is not specifically focused on the Latino/a non-academic population, this rich ethnography places campus custodians—an often invisible population of employees at the center of higher education research. Through this study Magolda reveals invisible practices that frequently contradict universities’ espoused values of inclusion and equity. Through Magolda’s work one can see inspiring stories of courageous and resilient workers and how they face intolerance, inequity, and injustices.

Magolda’s (2016) scope of study was larger than mine, as he studied the experiences of custodians at two different mid-western universities including a year of fieldwork. Through his study Magolda explicitly attempts to debunk stereotypes labeling custodians as ignorant, incompetent, untrustworthy people that must have done something wrong in their lives to end up with the job they have. Similar to my findings, Magolda found that the custodians he interviewed brought different forms of wisdom and knowledge to their campus.
Through his study, Magolda (2016) challenges higher education to change their negative stereotypes about campus custodian and to create ways to advance the education and professional development of these employees. Magolda raises important critical questions that directly relate to the findings of my study such as: Does the academy still believe wisdom is exclusive to particular professions or classes of people? Are universities really inclusive? Is addressing service workers’ concerns part of the mission of higher education? If universities profess to value education, why make it difficult for those on the margins, such as custodians, to “get educated?”

For example, Magolda (2016) describes the experiences of Ludmila, a 75-year old Russian woman who cleaned his office. After several months of interactions with Ludmila, Magolda learned that Ludmila had earned a doctorate in Russian language and was rejected for a Russian language translation job on campus. Ludmila’s story has similarities to Maria’s struggle to advance her career in dining services at MU. Maria has managed restaurants in Mexico and brings more than a decade of experience in the food industry, yet she is not considered managerial because she lacks a college degree. As Magolda questions in his study, should not Ludmila and Maria have more opportunities to get educated and advance within educational institutions? Other overlapping themes between my research and Magolda’s study include the power of the family network, worker and managers’ strife, and the courage to confront power.

In his study, Magolda (2016) also shared vivid accounts of custodians challenging the power status quo on their campus without fear of negative repercussion. For instance, Magolda narrates how Vida, one of the custodians in his study, confronted a young man in the bathroom after he urinated in the urinal right next to her when she was cleaning. “Would you do this in front of your mom?” (Magolda, 2016, p. 173) Vida asked to the man. Magolda narrates that the
young man was shocked and left the bathroom quickly. “This never happened again,” commented Vida (p. 173). Vida’s account challenging power dynamics is similar to Maria’s interaction with one of the chef in her dining services job where she tore some meals recipes after the chef accused her of insubordination.

**Latinos/as in Higher Education Entry Level Professional Positions**

Research of Latino/a non-academic employees is a pending gap in the higher education body of knowledge. This study contributed to what is known about the experiences of Latino/a non-academic employees who work in labor intensive positions in areas such as housekeeping, dining services, and maintenance. However, it is important to also study the experiences of Latinos/as in non-academic professional entry level positions such as academic advisors, financial aid advisors, study abroad advisors, residence hall coordinators, and admissions recruiters. It would be interesting to see what power and hierarchy struggles they observe from their position in the organization chart. In research intensive institutions such as MU that prioritize academic rankings and the rise of research expenditures, it is common to see non-academic employees treated as liabilities. For instance, the first to be targeted during budget crisis are non-academic staff (Keller, 2016). It is important to continue to study how Latino/a non-academic employees survive and thrive in an increasingly underfunded and risky higher education industry. Furthermore, I think it is important to understand what are the professional and personal traits that help some Latino/a non-academic employees thrive in the midst of uncertain work environments.

While this study has contributed to putting Latino/a non-academic employees on the map of higher education research, this study can also serve as a basis for more multi-disciplinary research between higher education and human resources fields. For instance, understanding how
to keep labor intensive employees motivated within a university setting can be a subject worth exploring. The labor intensive tasks that Latino/a non-academic employees perform can be tedious, monotonous, and often considered futile. While this study contributed to explore the work environments of my study participants, I would have liked to learn more about the conditions that kept my participants working at MU for over a decade. Besides the traditional pay and benefits incentives, I think it is important for the fields of higher education and human resources to understand what keeps labor intensive employees motivated and engaged with their jobs.

This study has shown that non-academic employees have deeper stories and can offer more to the campus community than merely cleaning toilets or washing dishes. Latino/a non-academic employees can also be key stakeholders in the retention of our students and the promotion of a more inclusive campus. In a campus as big as MU, it is important for students to develop personal relationships with students, faculty, and staff. Non-academic employees can teach our students the values of work ethic and dedication. Non-academic employees can also play a key role in the retention of students by offering a welcoming and clean environment. Latino/a non-academic employees can also offer rich stories about the world and humanity. For instance, when I worked as a Residence Hall Coordinator at MU several years ago, I would often hear heartfelt stories from students telling how our Latino/a custodian would often bring home made tamales or leave sticky notes with Spanish vocabulary words in their rooms. Other students would often interview our custodians to complete their Spanish class assignments. Future studies can be pursued on the role that non-academic support staff plays in the retention and success of students at MU.
Latinos/as in Middle Management and Senior Level Positions

It would be beneficial for the research of Latinos/as in higher education to track the career progress of the few Latinos/as who make it into middle management or senior level leadership positions in higher education. It would be interesting to see what kind of training or mentoring these Latinos/as received to move up in a field that is predominantly White. Some would argue that Latinos/as are not themselves and have to act less Latino/a if they want to move up in higher education. I would also like to know if these successful Latinos/as feel like they succeeded because of their own individual efforts or because there is a strong network of Latino/a community that helped them achieve career success. Most importantly, it would be good to know if the power struggles for Latinos/as in middle management or senior leadership disappear, increase, or just look different.

Non-Academic Professional Positions

There should be studies on power dynamics in fiscal and clerical non-academic staff at MU. I would argue that proximity to deans and senior administration gives these employees political power over other employees. Having worked in entry level and mid-management positions at MU, I have often noticed that fiscal and clerical non-academic staff often play an informal role as advisors to senior administration and weigh in the decision making process of academic units such as personnel matters or implementation of new programs. Not surprisingly, most of these fiscal and clerical positions are filled by White employees. It would be interesting to study if this kind of political power coming from fiscal and clerical staff has any influence on higher education shared governance.

This study also unveils the increasing connection between higher education and the human resources management field. Similar to the higher education field, through this
dissertation project, I noticed an alarming research gap on the experiences of Latinos/as in human resources academic journals. This study has contributed to provide a multidisciplinary perspective on the experiences of Latino/a service/maintenance employees that are catalogued as non-managerial personnel under the MU human resources job classification family. Under the current MU job family human resources classification, Jose and Maria are outside of the managerial human resources job classification at MU (University of Missouri Human Resources, n.d.). On one hand, the Custodian position job title offers only one tier of supervision level under the managerial grid. On the other hand, the Food Service Worker job title offers up to 4 tiers for advancement, but the entire job title is outside the managerial job classification family (University of Missouri Human Resources n.d.). A review of the MU human resources job families and classification shows that the human resources dynamics of this campus are top heavy where service/maintenance employees have very limited opportunities to advance to managerial levels. With the recent corporatization of higher education, it would be interesting to study how does university human resources job classifications and career advancement practices perpetuate issues of power, hierarchy, and inequality in the academic and non-academic MU worlds (Magolda, 2016).

**Implications for Practice**

As a practitioner in the field of higher education, I find this section particularly useful. My hope is that the increased knowledge about the experiences of non-academic Latino/a employees at MU will positively impact the professional and personal experiences of an important segment of the MU employee population. Based on the new knowledge found in this study, below I make some recommendations for campus administration and senior leaders.
Need for Human Resources Training

My participants Jose and Maria are both hard working and dedicated employees who have worked for over a decade at MU in the same department. They both have had hands on leadership experience before working at the university, but I noticed that they lacked training in the area of conflict resolution. Jose’s way to handle conflict at work was to stay away from any controversial situations and stay quiet. However, Maria’s way to address conflict was to face it head on and engage in personal battles with supervisors and others. While some times it is best to remain quiet or to address conflict “head on”, Jose and Maria may grow professionally if they are train on different techniques to effectively manage conflict resolutions at work. Their lack of higher education political savvy alone to manage conflict may well be one of the main reasons preventing Jose and Maria from advancing to managerial positions. This not to say that Jose and Maria are inherently wrong in the way they handle conflict. Working in a vulnerable role at the bottom of the human resource job classification, may leave Maria and Jose with no chance but to deal with conflict the best they can. For example, Maria may tear recipes in front of her supervisors because this might be the only option she has for her concerns to be taken seriously. With coaching and mentoring of seasoned Latino/a colleagues at the university, they can learn to effectively navigate the politics of an over-hierarchical, top heavy work place to their own career benefit.

Jose and Maria could also benefit much from human resources and leadership training where they learn about different styles of leadership and how to manage work-related stress. Jose’s and Maria’s thoughts on leadership were closely associated with hierarchy and power. Learning about situational leadership, servant leadership, or transformational leadership can help Jose and Maria view their labor intensive duties and non-academic work titles as signs of
strength. Helping labor intensive professionals understand that leadership can also be done from the bottom up might encourage them to get involved in opportunities for personal and professional growth. Through our interviews, both Maria and Jose showed desire to pursue professional development opportunities to improve themselves. While MU offers free human resources professional development seminars throughout the year, I wonder about the number of para-professional non-academic employees who actually take advantage of these types of opportunities. I also wonder if their supervisors give them permission to attain these seminars during regular work hours. Another issue may be English language proficiency because most Latino/a non-academic employees that I have met have limited English proficiency.

Create Non-Academic Non-Traditional Paths to Management

Despite their hard work, time of service, and desire to grow, Jose and Maria do not have any chances to move up to management under the current human resources model in their departments. Jose has not finished high school education, and Maria holds an associate’s degree. Their departments require a bachelor’s degree to gain access into a managerial level job classification. Under current advancement conditions, it is very difficult for Jose and Maria to advance in their careers at MU. They both would need to take time away from their family and do night school. While they could take advantage of their 75% tuition remission benefit as MU employees, most college level courses are taught in the morning which would disrupt their work schedule. While online education might be a solution for this issue, Jose and Maria have been out of school for so long that they would need the special mentoring and assistance of faculty or academic staff in a face to face format. This educational program would also need to be applied in an accelerated fashion including weekend and summer intensive which would significantly disruptive to Jose and Maria’s families.
Perhaps a more feasible option would be to establish a merit and seniority path into management system where non-academic employees can use their time of service, productivity, and merit as metrics to earn opportunities for management roles. In many ways these employees are already fulfilling managerial roles, but without the right pay and title. This should be a more economical way to promote diverse talent from within. MU often spend many financial and time resources in recruiting diverse talent from outside and forget to groom and train the promising diverse talent that we already have in our own backyard. By all means, MU can always use a fresh and new perspective from the recruitment of diverse talent from outside the university, but the inside knowledge of the campus culture and context is a competitive advantage that current MU employees possess.

If MU is serious about becoming a model institution for diversity and inclusion, the university ought to optimal ways to mentor, groom, and promote the many talented Latino/a individuals that already work at MU. For a university of this size it is imperative that there are culturally proficient and bilingual human resources specialists that can advise and meet regularly with Latino/a employees. There are many employment related complex processes such health insurance enrollment and retirement investment that are already difficult to understand to those with high English proficiency. Thus, it is necessary to have professionals available to advise a key segment of university employees through these important professional and personal decisions.

The Future of MU

In 2013, I had the opportunity to present a pilot study about Latino/a service/maintenance employees at MU in occasion of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) conference in Saint Louis, MO. Through this pilot study, one of my study participants
mentioned that the only reason she worked as a custodian for the university was because she
wanted to give a college education to her son. While she did not particularly enjoy the labor
intensive demands of her custodian job, she thought that the dependent tuition discount benefit of
her position was a good reason to stay in her job. I wonder how many other service/maintenance
employees at MU are aware of this benefit. MU was created to serve the needs of the people of
Missouri. MU ought to be accessible to the children of all employees, especially those
situational critical employees who literally keep the place running even in the midst of political
crisis, decreased funding, and inclement weather. Out of all people in Missouri, the children of
MU employees should have adequate opportunities to access and thrive through their college
degree completion. The college admissions process can be daunting for parents that have never
gone to college. MU could host outreach events for Latino/a non-academic employees where
they learn how to fill out admission forms, FAFSA, and health related forms. Latino/a non-
academic employees can also receive orientation on how standardized tests such as the ACT and
SAT work for the admission of their children. With the recent severe decline in enrollment, MU
Admissions ought to look at our own backyard first and facilitate the enrollment of MU
employees’ children.

Conclusion

I hope this study on the experiences of Latino/a non-academic labor at a predominantly
White institution serves to pave the way to humanize the work experience of Latino/a non
academic employees and advance a more in-depth and inclusive study of Latinos/as in higher
education scholarship and encourage our campus to develop an institutionalized strategic
diversity and inclusion plan. I also hope this study will serve as a literature foundation for
qualitative intersectionality empirical studies focused on non-academic
employees.

This study has presented the stories of two exemplary individuals that represent an important segment of MU’s labor force: Latino/a non-academic employees. Through this study, I presented the personal narratives of each participant within the context of an intersectionality framework. Latino/a non-academic employees at MU, like Maria and Jose, not only bring their hard work and sweat to our campus, but they also bring rich stories and backgrounds. They appreciate the opportunity to work and campus and want to pursue opportunities for professional and personal growth.

Latino/a non-academic employees bring many contributions to our campus and their value should not only be acknowledged during Hispanic Heritage month or rare events. The contributions of Latinos/as employees has a promise for the future as the children and grandchildren of these outstanding Latino/a non-academic employees will attend MU in the future. The MU Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity ought to look for ways to partner with MU Human Resources to create leadership and educational programs that best meet the needs of a nuanced and vulnerable population of employees. Not all minority employees have the same needs or face the same challenges. Thus, campus leaders need to have an open ear and purposeful plan to meet the unique needs of Latino/a employees. Similarly, affinity groups such as MU Voz Latina (former Hispanic Latin American Faculty & Staff Association) should become more inclusive and not just focus its membership to faculty and professional employees. It is time for MU to exercise true shared governance and bring faculty, non-academic employees, and students to develop an institutionalized diversity and inclusion strategic plan with clear outcomes and metrics for its implementation that would put the marginalized at the center of its mission.
Diversity, inclusion, and equity lectures, surveys, demonstrations, and educational events are great resources to make our campus more diverse and inclusive, but these efforts cannot stop there. It is time to see more pragmatic action to invest resources in educating and coaching marginalized non-academic employees in our campus to give them a seat at the shared governance table. If MU is going to be faithful to its mission as a land grant public institution, it should seriously take the charge of educating and advancing one of its most vulnerable and situationally critical employee populations. At the end of the day, the university cannot effectively function without the work of non-academic labor intensive Latino/as employees.
Appendix A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH VERSION)

**Researcher’s Name:** Miguel E. Ayllon

**Lead Researcher & Advisor Contact Information:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miguel E. Ayllon, MPA</th>
<th>Casandra Harper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Student, Lead Investigator</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
<td>202 Hill Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>W-1025 Lafferre Hall</td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbia MO 65211</td>
<td>Columbia MO 65211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell: (573) 355-3349</td>
<td>Office: (573) 882-2818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project Title:** Understanding the Experiences of Latino/a Non-Academic Employees at the University of Missouri

**YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO VOLUNTEER TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

My name is Miguel Ayllon. I am a Doctoral Student in the College of Education (ELPA) at the University of Missouri-Columbia, working on my dissertation under the direction of Casandra Harper, Advisor.

This form is provided to you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your employment relationship at the University of Missouri and department where you work. The person in charge of this research will describe this study and answer all of your questions. Additionally, you will receive a copy of this consent form for before participating in this study.

When you are invited to participate in research, you have the right to be informed about the study procedures so that you can decide whether you want to consent to participation. This form may contain words that you are not familiar with or understand. Please ask the researcher to explain any words or information that you do not understand.

As stated above, you have the right to know what you will be asked to do so that you can decide whether or not to be in the study. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not want to continue to be in the study, you may stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to stop participation in this study, simply inform the researcher of your desire to stop the study.

**The purpose of this study** is to understand the experiences of Latino/a or Hispanic Non-Academic Employees at the University of Missouri.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:
- Participate in 3 interviews lasting roughly one hour each

**Total estimated time to participate in this study** is 3-4 hours.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study:
This study may bring some confidentiality concerns as supervisors or department heads may be able to track participants’ identity based on the experiences they share. To effectively minimize confidentiality concerns, this study will not use participants’ identifying information such as name, job title, and department where they work. Furthermore, no signature will be collected for this Participant Consent Form.

Other than the confidentiality concern addressed above, your participation in this study is not expected to cause you any risks greater than those encountered in everyday life.

Participants have an opportunity to reflect upon their stories of success and struggle in a higher education institution, their prior educational experiences, and their future professional development plans.

Participants have an opportunity to provide feedback on their level of satisfaction on University of Missouri academic, professional, and personal services provided or not provided to them.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- No identifiable information will be collected during the interview session.
- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.
- Interview session will be digitally recorded for later transcription.
- Only researchers and their research assistants associated with this project will review the recorded data.
- All digital recorders and files will be stored in a secure place (e.g., a locked cabinet for the recorders or a password protected computer folder for digital files).

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Missouri-Columbia and member of its Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications and presentations will use pseudonyms to protect your identity. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in this study.

You can contact the Campus Institutional Review Board directly by telephone or email to voice or solicit any concerns, questions, input or complaints about the research study.

You can contact the Lead Investigator, Miguel Ayllon, directly by telephone or email at any time to voice or solicit any concerns, questions, input or complaints about the research study.

Miguel E. Ayllon, MPA
Doctoral Student, Lead Investigator
University of Missouri
N-52 Memorial Union
Columbia MO 65211
Cell: (573) 355-3349
Email: ayllonm@missouri.edu
Appendix B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (Spanish Version)

Formulario de Consentimiento del Participante

**Nombre del Investigador:** Miguel E. Ayllon

**Información del Investigador Principal & Consejero/a**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nombre</th>
<th>Cargo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miguel E. Ayllon, MPA</td>
<td>Profesora Asociada, Consejero/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estudiante de Doctorado, Investigador Principal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universidad de Missouri</td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
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<tr>
<td>N-52 Memorial Union</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbia MO 65211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celular: (573) 355-3349</td>
<td>Oficina: (573) 882-2818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project Title:** Entendiendo las experiencias de trabajadores Latinos que trabajan en áreas no-academicas en la Universidad de Missouri.

**USTED ESTAS SIENDO SOLICITADO VOLUNTARIAMENTE PARA PARTICIPAR EN UN ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACION**

Mi nombre es Miguel Ayllon y soy un estudiante del programa de doctorado del Colegio de Educación (ELPA) en la Universidad de Missouri- Columbia y estoy trabajando en mi tesis bajo la dirección de mi consejera académica, Dr. Casandra Harper.

Este formulario se le es provisto para que usted pueda decidir si quiere participar en este estudio de investigación. Usted debe tener en cuenta que usted está libre de decidir en no participar o de cancelar su participación en este estudio en cualquier momento sin afectar su relación de empleo con la Universidad de Missouri y el departamento en el cual trabaja. La persona a cargo de este estudio de investigación describirá este estudio y responderá todas sus preguntas sobre este estudio. Adicionalmente, usted recibirá una copia de este formulario de consentimiento antes de participar en el estudio.

Cuando usted es invitado a participar en proyectos de investigación, usted tiene el derecho de ser informado sobre los procedimientos del estudio para que usted pueda decidir si usted quiere dar su consentimiento para participar en el estudio. Este formulario puede contener palabras con las que usted no esté familiarizado/a o no entienda. Por favor pida al investigador que explique cualquiera palabra que usted no entienda.

Como ya se mencionó arriba, usted tiene el derecho a saber qué consiste este estudio para que usted pueda decidir si quiere participar o no en el estudio. Su participación es voluntaria. Si usted no desea continuar con este estudio, usted puede parar en cualquier momento sin penalidades o pérdidas de beneficios de los cuales usted tiene derecho. Si usted desea terminar su participación en este estudio simplemente informése al investigador principal del estudio.

**El propósito de este estudio** es entender las experiencias de trabajadores Latinos que trabajan en áreas no-academicas en la Universidad de Missouri.

Si usted acepta participar en este estudio, le pediremos que haga las siguientes cosas:
Participar en 3 entrevistas con una duración aproximada de 1 hora por entrevista (60 minutos)
Tiempo total calculado de participación en el estudio: 3-4 horas

Riesgos y Beneficios por Participar en el estudio

- Este estudio de investigación podría causar preocupaciones de confidencialidad pues supervisores y jefes de su departamento podrían llegar a descubrir su identidad basado en las experiencias que usted comparta durante la entrevista. Para que las preocupaciones de confidencialidad sean mínimas, este estudio no utilizará sus datos personales como su nombre, posición de trabajo, departamento. Adicionalmente no se colectará su firma en esta forma de consentimiento.
- Aparte de las preocupaciones de confidencialidad explicadas arriba, no se espera que su participación en este estudio le cause riesgos más grandes de los que encuentra en su vida cotidiana.
- Participantes tienen la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre sus historias de éxito y dificultades de trabajar en una institución universitaria, su historia educacional y sus futuros planes de desarrollo profesional.
- Participantes tienen la oportunidad de proveer sugerencias sobre el nivel de satisfacción en los servicios académicos, profesionales, y personales que la Universidad de Missouri les provee o no provee.

Protecciones de Confidencialidad y Privacidad

- Ningún dato personal o identificación personal serán recolectados durante la sesión de entrevista.
- Los datos que se creen sobre su participación estarán disponibles para otros investigadores en el futuro para propósitos de investigación no detallados en este formulario de consentimiento de participante. En estos casos, los datos no incluirán sus datos de identidad con los cuales se le pueda asociar en este u otros estudios.
- La sesión de entrevista será grabada digitalmente para ser transcrita posteriormente.
- Solo investigadores y sus asistentes de investigación asociados a este proyecto revisaran los datos grabados.
- Todas las grabadoras digitales serán guardadas en un sitio seguro (por ejemplo, encerrados en un depósito para grabadoras o un folder de computadora protegido con una clave para datos digitales).

Los archivos de este estudio serán guardados seguramente y serán confidenciales. Personas autorizadas de la Universidad de Missouri-Columbia y miembros del Institutional Review Board tendrán el derecho legal de revisar archivos de investigación y protegerán la confidencialidad de esos records a la medida que sean protegidos por la ley. Todas las publicaciones y presentaciones serán usadas con seudónimo para proteger su identidad. Durante el estudio, los investigadores le informaran de nueva información que estara disponible y puede afectar su decisión de permanecer en el estudio.

Usted puede contactar a los representantes del Campus Institutional Review Board directamente por teléfono o correo electrónico para comunicarle cualquier preocupación, preguntas, sugerencias o quejas sobre el proyecto de investigación.

Usted puede contactar al investigador principal, Miguel Ayllon, directamente por teléfono o correo electrónico a cualquier momento para comunicarle cualquier preocupación, preguntas, sugerencias o quejas sobre el proyecto de investigación.
Campus Institutional Review Board
483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia MO 65211
573-882-9585
E-Mail: umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu
Website: http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm

Miguel E. Ayllon, MPA
Doctoral Student, Lead Investigator
Universidad de Missouri
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Email: ayllonm@missouri.edu
Appendix C

Participants Recruitment Email (English Version)

Dear __________,

My name is Miguel Ayllon, and I am a student in the Ph.D. Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program at the University of Missouri (MU).

I am conducting a research study on the experiences of Latino/a Non-Academic Employees at MU as part of my dissertation to fulfill the academic requirements of my program. I am contacting you to see if you would be interested in participating in my research study. The study includes 3 interview sessions that will last approximately 1 hour each. The interview will be held out of your working hours and at an off-campus location of your preference. You will be compensated $20 per interview.

Attached please find the consent form for this study to learn all the details you will need to know about this study. Please read this form carefully and let me know if you have any questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your employment relationship at the University of Missouri and department were you work.

Please reply to this email at your earliest convenience if you are interested in participating in this study.

Thank you!

Miguel Ayllon
Appendix D

Participants Recruitment Email (Spanish Version)

Estimado/a ___________,

Mi nombre es Miguel Ayllon y soy un estudiante de doctorado en el programa de Liderazgo Educacional y Análisis de Política en el Colegio de Educación de la Universidad de Missouri (MU).

Estoy liderando un estudio de investigación sobre las experiencia de trabajadores Latinos de áreas no-académicas en MU como parte de mi tesis para poder completar los requisitos académicos de mi programa de estudio. Lo/a contacto para saber si usted estaría interesado/a en participar en este estudio. Este estudio incluye 3 entrevistas personales que duraran 1 hora por entrevista aproximadamente. La entrevista se realizara fuera de sus horas de trabajo y en un lugar fuera del campus que sea de su preferencia. Usted será compensado/a con $20 por entrevista.

Adjunto a este email por favor encuentre un formulario de consentimiento del participante. Por favor lea este formulario detalladamente y avíseme si tiene alguna pregunta.

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Usted debe tener en cuenta que usted esta libre de decider en no participar o de cancelar su participación en este estudio en cualquier momento sin afectar su relación de empleo con la Universidad de Missouri y el departamento en el cual trabaja.

Por favor responda a este correo electrónico si usted está interesado/a en participar en este estudio.

Gracias!

Miguel Ayllon
Appendix E

Interview Protocol #1
Approximately ONE HOUR

Personal Story

1. MAIN QUESTION: Where are you from and what led you to your current position at MU?

SUB-QUESTIONS?
Growing up, how did you define yourself socioeconomically? Explain

   a. How does this inform your view of your colleagues who may or may not have the same socioeconomic status as you?

   How do you identify yourself culturally and/or ethnically?

   b. How does the way you identify inform your view of your colleagues who may or may not have the same cultural identity as you?

   c. Have you ever been at jobs where you were not a member of the cultural minority? Describe what that experience was like?

   Have you met other Latinos at MU? How has this experience been?
   If answer is yes:
   a. How did you meet this person or group of people?
   b. How often do you interact with this person or group on campus?
   c. Would you like to meet more often and on what context?
Appendix F

Interview Protocol #2
Approximately ONE HOUR

Context of Being an MU Employee

MAIN QUESTION: How would you describe your experience as a MU employee in your current department?
   a. What is a typical work day like? What time do you arrive and leave from work?
   b. Do you have any special meetings or unique opportunities/interactions that you didn’t mention as part of your typical day?
   c. How much interaction/communication do you have from people within or outside your department?
   d. How collegial the department is, do they interact with co-workers on a social level? Do they want to?

SUB-QUESTIONS

2. If you could take a course at MU, what course would it be and why?

3. If you were talking to a Latino/a job candidate about what it’s like to work at MU as a member of the Latino/a community, what would you say to that person?
   a. Is your department a supportive place to work?
   b. Is there anything you would change if you could—anything the university could be doing better to meet the needs of Latinos/as?
   c. Do Latinos have a collective voice on campus?
Appendix G

Interview Protocol #3
Approximately ONE HOUR

The Future

MAIN QUESTION: What are your plans for the future? Where do you see yourself in the next five years: same position and department? Or do you have plans to move to a different position? Why?
References


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VITA

Miguel Ayllon is originally from Lima, Peru and immigrated to the U.S. back in 1999 when he was 17 years old. Miguel graduated from Bryan College (Dayton, Tennessee) in 2004 with a B.A. in Communication Arts and a B.S. in Business Administration. Miguel worked as a Medical Interpreter for a non-profit organization in Southwest Virginia right after college until he went back to school to pursue graduate education at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) in Johnson City, Tennessee. He graduated from ETSU with a master’s degree in Public Administration. During his graduate education at ETSU, Miguel also held a graduate assistantship as a Resident Director for ETSU’s Department of Housing and Residence Life. It is through his graduate assistantship at ETSU that he learned of the fascinating opportunities to develop a professional career and make a difference in students’ lives through higher education.

Miguel came to the University of Missouri (MU) in 2008 to serve as Residence Hall Coordinator for the Department of Residential Life, managing the South Hall learning community where he worked closely with student-athletes. In 2011 Ayllon joined the MU International Center, serving as Study Abroad Adviser for Spain and Latin American regions before transitioning to the International Outreach Coordinator role for the College of Engineering in 2013. Miguel became the MU Director for International Engineering and STEM Programs in July 2016. In this new role, Miguel provides vision, leadership, and management for MU’s engineering and STEM internationalization efforts, including the development of international research initiatives, international student recruitment and services, and study abroad programs. Miguel is committed to use his professional career to coach and empower future generations of transformational leaders in higher education.