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INTERSECTIONS OF CULTURAL AND CAREER IDENTITY AMONG MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

By

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ABSTRACT

INTERSECTIONS OF CULTURAL AND CAREER IDENTITY
AMONG MEXICAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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This study explores how cultural and career identity intersects during the college experience of Mexican American business students at Michigan State University. The college experience facilitates exploration of one's ethnic and racial identity as students struggle to find their place within larger social, economic and political contexts. The struggle to integrate one's career aspirations within a societal context historically bound by barriers to educational access, economic resources and political opportunities suggests unique concerns in how ethnic and racial minorities develop career and vocational identities.

Numerous scholars have studied how the college experience affects students, but research on identity formation, particularly the identity of students of color, is sparse (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Further, criticism of traditional theories of career development have arisen from their the neglect of the unique historical and social circumstances of racial and ethnic minorities (Leong, 1995; Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995). Arbona (1995) notes that the career development research and theory for Hispanics has been given little attention in vocational literature. US Census data more than suggest the presence of continuing educational and economic barriers for Latino origin Americans in the U.S., specifically Mexican Americans. Moreover, the projected growth of the Latino work force and their under-representation in higher educational attainment and

professional roles may indicate a preparation gap in readiness for an increasingly technical labor force. These facts underscore the significance of this study of Mexican American college students.

As the individual faces critical moments or turning points in his/her development, such as choice of profession, a crisis of identity occurs which stimulates the individual's mediation of self with the larger social world. Identity evolves then as individuals negotiate their social and cultural backgrounds within the parameters of their social worlds and lived experiences. This raises some interesting questions as we study groups who have been traditionally disenfranchised within our society: What cultural elements are important to preserve in moving toward one's professional identity and which are lost? What conflicts in socio-cultural values may arise for a generation of students who cross professional borders previously closed to their ancestors? Do new cultural systems develop as these boundaries are crossed?

Findings of the study derived from 17 interviews include a) identification of barriers, influences, and opportunities in the college experience that affect Mexican American student persistence in college; b) evidence to suggest the salience of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986; 1997) as an influence in Mexican American college student achievement in business; c) family support, beliefs, and influences regarding career choices; d) the significance of co-ethnic peer associations in intersections of career and cultural identity; and e) implications regarding cultural change and social learning.

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LINDA S. GROSS

2001

DEDICATION

If we will only learn to let live, the plan for growth is all there.
-Erik Erikson

To my grandmother, Lilly Marie Erke, whose dream it was to see her grandchildren attend college and to my family and friends whose love and support continue to inspire and sustain me.

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Margaret Mead once said "The traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his doorstep." It is in the people we meet along the way that we come to know ourselves and our world. I am such a traveler, although I make no claim to wisdom, I am grateful for the many guides I have met on the path.

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In each step I have taken and continue to take, I carry with me the gifts I have learned from each of you in hopes that I might be able to share them with others.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

CRU	Culturas de las Razas Unidas, defined on p. 39.
MBP	Multicultural Business Programs, defined on p. 36.
MEXA	Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlan, defined on p. 40.
NAHBS	Native American and Hispanic Business Students, defined on p. 37.
NHBA	National Hispanic Business Association, defined on p. 38.

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Part of the human struggle lies in our attempts to understand who we are. Characteristics such as class, race, gender and nationality help to determine our place, our station, and, in part, are proscribed by the larger social structure. Yet there is another part of the human struggle that originates from a vision of possibility we have for ourselves - a vision of what we hope to become. The steps we take toward actualizing that vision reflect our role in constructing an emergent identity. One such step is choosing a vocation. This is particularly relevant to Latino/a students since U.S. social structures have clearly placed limits on their opportunities.

The purpose of this study is to explore how cultural and career identity intersects during the college experience of Mexican American business students. The essence of the topic is best understood by considering two questions. "Who are you?" is a question that seeks to define identity in the present. "Who do you want to be?" is a question that points toward future identity. Together, these two questions suggest a process that helps one move from a present identity to aspired ones. A central concern of this study is to explore cultural and career identity processes among Mexican American college students in business.

Significance of the Problem

Erikson identified the "inability to settle on an occupational identity" (1959, p. 132) as a primary crisis for young people. Indeed, one's coming of age in contemporary American society is based primarily on clarifying one's occupation. "What do you do?" or "Where do you work?" are central questions in nearly any

initial dialogue between individuals. In the college setting, a significant amount of student identity is drawn from one's major. It is hard to imagine a discourse between college students that does not include the question, "So, what's your major?"

The college experience may also facilitate exploration of one's ethnic and racial identity as students struggle to find their place within larger social, economic and political contexts. The struggle to integrate one's career aspirations within a societal context historically bound by barriers to educational access, economic resources and political opportunities suggests that there may be unique concerns in how ethnic and racial minorities develop career and vocational identities.

Numerous scholars have studied how the college experience affects students, but research on identity formation, particularly the identity of students of color, is sparse (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Further, one of the central problems with the fit of traditional theories of career development has been the neglect of the unique historical and social circumstances of racial and ethnic minorities (Leong, 1995). Osipow and Littlejohn (1995) predicate their discussion toward a multicultural theory of career development on the following:

> The role and importance of the history, education, and social, political and economic experience of each of the respective ethnic groups is seen to be clearly related to their career experiences. The inclusion of these contextual perspectives must play a central role in any serious attempt toward the creation of a multicultural theory of career development. (Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995, p. 251)

It follows, then, that any significant inquiry into the career development process of racial and ethnic minorities must consider how the differences inherent in social, historical, economic, and political contexts impact these groups. A contextual approach is especially important for research on Latino populations due to the inherent heterogeneity of its subgroups (i.e. Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans among others). While a case can be

made for panethnic studies of Latino cultures, it is important to first explore the unique characteristics of each Latino population in its own right. Arbona (1995) notes that the career development research and theory for Hispanics has been given little attention in vocational literature. These facts underscore the significance of this study of Mexican American college students.

Erikson (1968) suggests an essential link between identity and cultural heritage. As the individual faces critical moments or turning points in his/her development, such as choice of profession, a crisis of identity occurs which stimulates the individual's mediation of self with the larger social world. Identity evolves then as individuals negotiate their social and cultural backgrounds within the parameters of their social worlds and lived experiences. Erikson (1968) refers to this as a process of social evolution, suggesting youth conserve cultural and social elements that are significant to them and discard those which are no longer significant. This raises some interesting questions as we study groups who have been traditionally disenfranchised within our society: What cultural elements are important to preserve in moving toward one's professional identity and which are lost? What conflicts in socio-cultural values may arise for a generation of students who cross professional borders previously closed to their ancestors? Do new cultural systems develop as these boundaries are crossed?

The significance of exploring student professional identity is underscored by research on student career choice and development in college. In their summary of research on how college affects career development, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) outline three essential concepts. First, is Astin's suggestion that many college students implement a career rather than choose one backed by evidence that initial career choice is the best predictor of career choice and occupational entry at the end of college (Astin, 1977). Second, is the fact that many students change their career choices and majors during college. While

Pascarella and Terenzini indicate that changes in career choice may be due to increased career exposure during students' college education, they also suggest that this change may be linked to a concept of *career maturity*. *Career maturity* refers to the level at which students accomplish developmental career tasks, formulate career plans, and understand the parameters of their chosen career (Super, 1957). Pascarella and Terenzini note that the degree to which students are certain about their career choice and the steps necessary to actualize it are also vital elements of career maturity. Third, is the suggestion that uncertainty in career choice is associated with students' withdrawal from college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Taken together, these concepts underscore the need to explore the processes that lead to students' formation of a professional career identity. The implications of the proposed study may lead to a better understanding of the uncertainties and barriers faced by Mexican American students in moving into college majors and professions, such as business, in which they are significantly under-represented. How does culture affect negotiation of the barriers and uncertainties faced by Mexican American college students? How might career identity affect the student's cultural identity and values? Such knowledge may be helpful to increasing Mexican American student persistence in college, as well as their success in fields such as business. Another implication of the study is that it provides a salient look at cultural change as we explore the intersection of two facets of identity.

An essential caveat to these implications is that terms such as *success* are generally best understood in individual terms. What may be a success for one individual may not be acceptable for another. I take success to be the student's ability to have met his/her individual goals, especially as it relates to education and career. Persistence in college (i.e. the sustained effort toward earning a college degree) to graduation, may not be necessary for success in

some business fields, however it is generally a measure of success relative to college students' educational goals.

Demographic Support of Significance

According to census figures, the U.S. population of Latinos has grown rapidly in the past two decades. Population projections suggest that the rapid growth of Latinos will continue into the 21st century reaching perhaps 22 percent of the total U.S. population by 2050 (Cordova & del Pinal, 1995). According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, Hispanics are projected to account for approximately 11.1 percent of the U.S. labor force in the year 2005, which represents the largest percentage increase of any other work force population for the same period (Fullerton, 1991). However, despite some improvement in educational attainment from 1980-1990, Bureau of Census figures indicate that Hispanic educational attainment levels "remain significantly below that of their non-Hispanic counterparts" (Montgomery, 1994, p. 3). According to 2000 Census figures, the gap in educational attainment continues to be pronounced. Only 10.6 percent of the Hispanic population holds a bachelors degree or more as compared to 28.1 percent of the non-Hispanic population (Therrien & Ramirez, 2000a). Among the Hispanic subgroups, there is considerable difference in educational attainment of bachelor degrees or higher: Mexican origin, 6.9 percent; Puerto Rican origin, 13 percent; Cuban origin, 23 percent; Central and South American origin 10.6 percent (Therien & Ramirez, 2000b). Further the occupational distribution of Hispanics in the labor force is skewed toward "low paying, less stable, and more hazardous occupations" (Cordova & del Pinal, 1995, p. 17). Only 11 percent of Hispanic males and 18 percent of Hispanic females are employed in managerial or professional specialty occupations as compared to 31 percent of White males and 35 percent of White females for the same occupational group (United States Bureau of Census, 2001). Therrien

and Ramirez (2000) report that Mexican Americans (11.9%) were the least likely among Latino groups to work in managerial or professional occupations. These data more than suggest the presence of continuing educational and economic barriers for Latino origin Americans in the U.S., specifically Mexican Americans. Moreover, the projected growth of the Latino work force and their under-representation in higher educational attainment may indicate a preparation gap in readiness for an increasingly technical labor force.

This study explores cultural and career identity development among Mexican American college students. It reveals how perceptions of barriers and opportunities in the college experience affect Mexican American student persistence in college and success in professional fields such as business. If we can identify barriers to student success, we can effectively develop strategies to help students negotiate and move beyond them. Similarly, this study helps to identify opportunities to support Mexican American student success by gaining a better understanding of the intersection of cultural and career identity factors in the process of college student development.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to situate the study of the intersection of cultural heritage and career identity of Latino business students during their college years within the bounds of current research and theory, it is necessary to 1) delineate a set of definitions and operational terms which will serve to ground discussion of the inquiry; 2) assemble the relevant segments of career development and vocational identity research and theory as applicable to the current inquiry of college students; and 3) provide an appropriate contextual understanding of the ethnic groups described by the term "Hispanic" and the role of ethnic consciousness in Latino communities and the college experience.

Definitions and Operational Terms

Culture. Culture is a human construct that is influenced both by environmental factors and social interaction. As environmental and social factors change, so do human responses to them. Culture evolves as needs, outcomes, and circumstances change within our society. Our study of culture then, is really a study of the meanings we create through our responses to the world, as Clifford Geertz has so well articulated:

> Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning." (1973, p. 5)

Culture is derived from the significance we invest in historical, social, political and economic experiences that we create and interpret through interactions with others. As human experiences and interactions vary, so will the meanings invested in those experiences. It is precisely these variances, or differences in culture, which engage our study of identity.

Ethnicity. Ethnicity can be described as affinity to a group and its cultural patterns usually drawn from sharing a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic, or cultural heritage. It is a state of consciousness or facet of identity often defined as unique in contrast to other cultural groups. Ethnicity serves to identify a group of people from a larger whole based on characteristic differences. Ethnicity can also serve as the foundation for social and political organizing functions to advance the interests of a particular group. In this conception, uniting to access political, educational and economic opportunities work to shape a group's sense of identity within larger social contexts. Fundamentally, culture is a product of ethnicity, which is continually recast as groups interpret their experiences in relation to others. Thus, ethnicity is malleable as a social construct.

Identity, self-concept and self-efficacy. It is important to consider these terms together as they represent three important perspectives related to the self. I draw upon the work of Erikson (1968), Bandura (1986, 1997), Gottfredson (1991), Super (1984) and Vondracek (1997) in defining these terms. Erikson is the foundation for our concept of identity and identity processes. In his view, identity formation includes both psychological and social factors that undergo "simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning" (Erikson, 1968, p. 22). Erikson presents us with a psychosocial concept of identity, a sense of self that emerges through the interaction between the individual and his/her social world. It is this working definition of identity that provides a foundation for our discussion of cultural and career identity.

Self-concept is an element of *identity*. Gottfredson (1981) defines self-concept as "one's view of oneself, one's view of who one is and who one is not. When projecting oneself into the future, self-concept also includes whom one

expects or would like to be. People may or may not be consciously aware of the totality of different ways of seeing oneself, but they act on their beliefs about themselves" (p. 547).

Super (1984) suggests that the terminology of *self-concept* needs to be specified as a *personal construct* in order to understand the relationship of the self from both the psychological and sociological perspectives. Self-concept can best be seen as how one has internalized his/her identity as a function of psychological development. Identity can be seen as a larger definition of the self, influenced by external sociological factors such as race, class and gender, as well as the internal psychological construct of self-concept.

By conceiving of identity as a construct, Vondracek (1992) suggests the interpretive nature of identity as a multidimensional process that extends throughout the life cycle. As individuals encounter new life roles such as college student, spouse, parent, citizen, and so on, they integrate these new facets of life into their identity. Similarly, one incorporates career roles into one's identity. The process Vondracek suggests is dynamic, changing over the life cycle and constantly interacting as individuals reflect on their individual self-concepts with their perceptions of how society defines life roles.

In short, identity develops through the continuous interplay of the individual's internal psychological self-concept and the external factors which influence the individual's sense of self in social contexts over one's lifetime. The interaction between the psychological and sociological is a foundation for defining identity as a structure.

Bandura's concept of self-efficacy also focuses on beliefs about the self and adds an important perspective to the individual's mediation of psychological and social influences. He defines self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to manage prospective

situations"(p. 37). Self-concept and self-efficacy refer to two different kinds of self-beliefs essential to our understanding of identity. Put simply, self-concept involves the individual's sense of self-worth; self-efficacy involves individual's confidence in his/her ability to negotiate the challenges inherent in the larger social world.

With this working definition of ***identity*** in mind, as well as the two associated elements of self-concept and self-efficacy, I turn now to the concept of ***career*** or ***vocational identity.***

Generally, vocational identity is one dimension of an individual's identity based on the occupational roles the individual assumes or seeks to assume in the world of work. It is generally held that the various dimensions of identity interact dynamically. Bordin (1984) suggests that "a person's life can be seen as a string of career decisions reflecting the individual groping for an ideal fit between self and work" (p. 101). As individuals crystallize their career or vocational plans, they develop an identity around their perceived role in their intended vocation stemming from the individual's need to develop an integrated sense of self (Holland, 1966; Holland, 1985; Super, 1957). Further, "a more comprehensive understanding of the construct of vocational identity will require consideration of the reciprocity of influence between the self and its developing identity, on the one hand, and the social environment, on the other" (Vondracek, 1992, p. 41).

An Orientation to Relevant Career and Vocational Theory and Research

A continuing challenge in the fields of career development and vocational guidance has been to find a comprehensive theoretical frame through which to analyze and understand the individual's vocational process. This challenge has produced a very diverse body of propositions forming a somewhat fragmented

and segmental theoretical base. One of the most pressing problems evident upon review of major career research is the inadequacy of the various theoretical models to address differentiation based on gender, race and class. These inadequacies are largely products of omission in that the genesis of foundational theories such as Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad and Herma (1951) Super (1957) and Holland (1966, 1985) were based on the study of primarily white, affluent, college bound men. The application of these theories to women and multicultural populations is questionable. Researchers seem to agree that the career choice and development theory is under-developed with regard to multicultural populations and women (Arbona, 1990; Arbona, 1995; Luzzo, 1992; Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995; Stitt-Gohdes, 1997).

For the current study, I focus on career development research relative to college student career identity. This follows from Astin's (1977) assertion that most college students are in the process of implementing rather than choosing their career. Although arguable, this assertion is supported by a number of career development models (Gottfredson, 1981; Super, 1984; Super, 1957), which suggest college-age students are in the process of solidifying their career aspirations and taking steps to achieve them. It is the developmental process of building a career identity that is the central focus of this study and thus draws our attention to developmental and social theories of career development. For as Vondracek (1992) suggests, it is one thing to know what a person does and how they behave, "but what is really worth knowing is why the person does what is done" (p. 40).

Arbona (1990, 1995) has provided an excellent review of career development research and theory with regard to Latino populations. She argues that the career development models of Super (1957, 1985, 1996), Vondracek (1990) and Vondracek et al. (1986), and the self-efficacy theory forwarded by

Bandura (1986) and others are salient with regard to their research potential with Latino populations. Drawing upon Arbona's work, I will summarize each of these models and their particular relevance to research with Latino populations and the proposed study.

Super's (1957, 1985, 1996) model of career development is an essential foundation to the developmental theories of vocation. The model defines a set of developmental tasks relative to stages of vocational development that are integrally and dynamically linked to the individual's self-concept, career maturity and life roles over their life span. One of the most significant contributions of Super's model lies in its relationship of self-concept to career development according to Zunker (1994). Super's self-concept theory is delineated into two distinct components, the psychological and the social. The psychological component refers to a personal process in which individuals make life choices and adapt to them. The social component focuses on how the individual perceives his/her options within prevailing socioeconomic environments. Although the social components of Super's theory model have been widely overlooked in preference to the psychological and personal aspects of self-concept, the social and environmental aspects of the theory are now being given attention especially with regard to racial and ethnic minority career development (Arbona, 1995; Arbona & Fouad, 1994; Osipow & Littlejohn, 1995; Stitt-Gohdes, 1997). The advantage of Super's model in research on racial and ethnic minority career development lies in its ability to incorporate structural environmental aspects such as discrimination, lack of opportunity, socioeconomic factors in individuals' development of their career self-concepts. This is especially relevant to the current study as Arbona (1990) has provided convincing evidence that "the lack of occupational mobility in Hispanics is related to structural factors, such as

socioeconomic status and lack of opportunities, and not to cultural factors" (p. 309).

Vondracek, Lerner and Schulenberg (1986) proposed a developmental-contextual approach to career development. The approach is comprised of interlocking systems and subsystems corresponding to a developing person acting in and reacting to changing contexts. Akin to Erikson's notion of psychosocial relativity, Vondracek argues that "no one level of analysis should be considered in isolation as the *prime mover* of change. Any level of analysis can only be understood in the context of the biological, cultural, and ontogenetic changes of which it is part" (Vondracek, 1992, p. 42). The main advantage of the developmental-contextual approach to career development is in the interconnectedness of its level of analysis. With the individual positioned at the epicenter, Vondracek et al.'s model defines subsystems of influence (family, school, peers, work place) extending out from the individual into larger macro systems of society (cultural values, laws, history). Due to the reciprocal nature of influences on individual identity in career development, Vondracek's model provides a frame for descriptive, qualitative studies that explore individuals' conceptions of their career development process and the interrelationships between significant influences in their lives. Further, Vondracek (1992) notes that career development literature is sparse with regard to exploratory, descriptive studies and concurs with Bordin (1984) in the need for in-depth case studies as a tool for understanding the complexity of interactions in individual vocational development.

Arising out of Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, the concept of *self-efficacy* refers to individuals' beliefs about their ability to achieve goals and persist in light of barriers they may encounter in achieving them. Arbona (1995) suggests self-efficacy could be a useful tool in understanding the career

development of Latinos in light of evidence that Latinos are likely to face barriers in achieving education and career goals. Further, the concept of self-efficacy can also be extended to groups in a collective form (Bandura, 1986). This suggests it may be a valuable tool for assessing the impact of peer associations between students of the same ethnic group as they negotiate barriers and work toward achieving educational and career aspirations in college. However, evidence suggests that there is a strong relationship between self-efficacy, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity (Arbona, 1995; Luzzo, 1992), so the interaction between these variables must be taken into account.

With regard to career development research on racial and ethnic minorities, a few studies provide insight for guiding current research. An early study by Kuvlesky, Wright and Juarez (1971) comparing status projections among Mexican American, African American and Anglo youth found that Mexican American youth were more likely to hold low-level career goals and anticipated more obstacles in their paths than Anglo and African American youth. Data from the 1990 census cited in Chapter 1 supports this finding as Latinos are concentrated in low status, low paying jobs. Forty-seven percent of Hispanic males and 42 percent of Hispanic females work in service occupations or as laborers (Cordova & del Pinal, 1995). Earnings for full-time, year-round Hispanic workers remain significantly below that of non-Hispanic Whites (Montgomery, 1994). Researchers have suggested a myriad of possible reasons for the lack of career status attainment of minority ethnic groups, from barriers associated with educational access and retention to historical disenfranchisement and lack of role models in high status careers.

The study of barriers may be very promising to understanding how perceptions affect college student vocational development (Leong, 1985). Several studies have examined this relationship in the career development of

women and racial and ethnic populations. Arbona and Novy (1991) found that there were more gender than ethnic differences in college freshmen's career aspirations and expectations. Holland and Eisenhart's (1990) study of college women reveals the influence of gender and peer cultures in women's college major and career choices. Strikingly, they found that while schools tend to perpetuate class, race and gender structures, "agemates are the more virulent purveyors of gender privilege than school authorities. (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 8)" Luzzo (1993) found that while there were few ethnic differences in perceived barriers in career development related to family, significant ethnic differences were found in perceptions of study skills, finances, and ethnic identity. In these areas, minority students were more likely to perceive barriers than white students. Evans and Herr (1994) conducted a study to assess the influence of racial identity and perception of discrimination on career aspirations of African American college students. While their results did not demonstrate that discrimination and racial identity significantly influenced African American student career aspirations, further research into the relationship of self-concept on career development of African Americans is suggested. McWhirter (1997) found that women anticipated more barriers to their career development than did men, and that Mexican American participants perceived more career barriers than did Anglo participants. "Mexican American youth may make assumptions that they cannot succeed or do not belong in academic and occupational environments in which they see few Hispanics (McWhirter, 1997, p. 547)." Evidence in these studies and others support further research into the role of perceived barriers in the career development process for women and racial ethnic minorities.

Research pertaining directly to Latino career development is sparse. However, the most salient work on Latino career development and suggestions

to guide future research is that of Arbona. Drawing on the work of Keefe and Padilla (1987), Arbona suggests that there may be a positive relationship between higher levels of acculturation and the career progression of Latino white-collar workers (Arbona, 1990). There is some evidence to suggest that the higher the acculturation level of Latino students to the majority culture in the U.S., the greater their potential to make good career decisions and access opportunities as their vocational goals are clearer and more stable (Morales, 1996). This may be because students who are more highly acculturated into the majority culture in the U.S. may perceive fewer barriers to their career aspirations. Interestingly, Morales' study also found that family and background variables were not significant influences on career identity in light of the predominant influence of acculturation. This finding supports Arbona's evidence contradicting those who would argue that the lack of occupational attainment is due to "socialization to traditional values and Hispanic families' failure to motivate children to aspire to high-status career achievement" (Arbona, 1990, p. 305). In order to control for acculturation and socioeconomic factors, Arbona suggests classification of Hispanic Americans based on generation level and socioeconomic status (Arbona, 1995). Additionally, Arbona argues for specification of subgroup due to the diversity of the population classified as Hispanic (Arbona, 1990). The heterogeneity of Hispanic ethnic classification is discussed in the next section.

Hispanic Labels and Latino Ethnic Consciousness

Hispanics are largely considered a minority group in the United States, but are decidedly different than other US racial/ethnic minority groups. Giménez (1992) argues that "Hispanics are not a minority group in the historical sense of the concept, but an extraordinarily heterogeneous population whose members differ in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, and social class

(p. 10)." The term "Hispanic" fails to capture the racial, ethnic and national diversity represented by those who fall into its classification[1] (see note on p. 30).

Ethnic identity is shaped by a number of influences. Terminology or labeling such as the term "Hispanic" creates a description of a group of people whose ethnicity may be simultaneously delineated and defined by the use of the term. Once a group is identifiable in society, it can be targeted for policy (i.e. immigration status, language, education) as well as social distinction in media. The description of the "Hispanic" community as expressed through media images in news, entertainment and advertising becomes a defining force in how society as a whole views those of Latin American decent. Giménez (1992) observes that ethnic labels have a "double connotation."

> On one hand minority leaders and educators present them as the symbols of cultures and identities of which people should be proud. On the other hand in the context of social science research and mass media discussion of social problems or of census information they identify populations that are disproportionately poor and plagued by all sorts of social problems and deviant/criminal behavior. In the case of Hispanic, the label 'upgrades' Chicano, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, and, broadly speaking, Latin American cultures by making them clones of the culture of Spain; it gives them a European veneer that denies both their Native American dimensions and their originality. At the same time, because it is used to identify a stigmatized population it downgrades all these groups, stigmatizing their cultures as the source of the problems faced by a significant proportion of their members while denying the economic and political causes of those problems. (p. 13)

This suggests a paradoxical nature of minority ethnic identity in the U.S. The cultural heritage, which may be a sense of pride and community support, is also a burden of labels built on societal impressions, however imprecise, which stigmatize those identified by it.

Oboler (1992) suggests that the ways in which Latin American peoples come to terms with their identity is a reflection of their direct experiences and their confrontations with race and class representations in the U.S. and how their representations fit within the American society. As American society tends to

overlook micro-ethnic identities and lumps Spanish-speaking and Latin American groups into one, the Latino communities have come to realize the macro-ethnic conception of "Hispanic" affords a pan-ethnic identity of greater numbers in which to negotiate structural barriers and advance social and economic growth. The term "Latino" has emerged as a significant alternative to the term Hispanic: "Latino" has been adopted by some members of the Latin American community as a self-descriptive term that incorporates all Latin American cultures regardless of language or national origin, thus placing classification on geographical boundaries as opposed to those of language and race. As a self-descriptor, "Latino" is growing as a symbol of pan ethnic self-determination and identity.

However, identifying as Latino does not supplant micro-ethnic identities such as Mexican, Chicano, Cubano, Dominican or Puerto Rican. Padilla (1985) suggests that identifying as Latino is situational and employed for purpose:

> The manifestation and salience of Latino ethnic-conscious identity and solidarity are operative within specific situational contexts or at certain times in the urban life of Spanish-speaking groups. In short, the Latino or Hispanic ethnic boundary and cleavage represents a specific case of situational ethnic identity. This means that the multiethnic unit is fabricated and becomes most appropriate or salient for social actions during those particular situations or moments when two or more Spanish speaking ethnic groups are affected by the structural forces noted above [education and employment] and mobilize themselves as one to overcome this impact. (Padilla, 1985, p. 4)

Thus, a macro-ethnic Latino identity can be seen to emerge from the effects of structural inequality within American society .

Ethnicity may be situationally employed as a facet of public identity and lever for social advancement. We define and are defined by our ethnic and cultural identities, which are continuously modified as we integrate the influences of social structures, such as class, race and gender, and our aspirations for the future with our self-concepts.

While the needs and issues of micro-ethnic Latino communities may vary, the power behind societal recognition of the macro-ethnic Latino community for structural advancement is a significant force for social reform. Padilla (1985) notes that "the decision of Spanish speaking groups about when to construct an inclusive or collective group identity and come to share a consciousness-of-kind as 'Latinos' is based on the groups' assessment of their goals and their options" (p. 64). Calderòn (1992) argues that Latino ethnicity serves as a basis for organizing around issues that threatens the pan ethnic Latino community, particularly issues which transcend individual ethnic groups and revolve around class, economic and political interests. He notes that the alliances that emerge under a Latino identity are situationally specific to the issues involved, however "where Latinos were distinguished from other groups along lines of power or class, they responded panethnically" (Calderòn, 1992, p. 41). Thus, ethnic identification as "Latino" can be seen as a situational tool used to negotiate the challenges of oppression in political and institutional arenas by garnering the power of a collective for self-determination.

Cultural change often arises from the interplay of opposing forces in society. Ethnic and class distinctions arise from the changing positions of groups within society and the perceptions of difference between those groups. Juan Gomez-Quinones (1994) provides an artful summary of ethnic consciousness:

> Ethnicity and its maintenance are elusive but very real social phenomena. As a general sense of peoplehood, ethnicity develops over time through a conglomeration of experiences and rhythms expressing on going synthesis. The historical, the structural, and the cultural are the woof and web in this process; power, wealth, and prestige affect the dye and cut. Conscious-ness and choice assume greater importance when there are more inter-actions across ethnic boundaries. Consciousness of identity and of membership in an ethnic community may be integral characteristics of ethnicity, but they also are private and public strategies and resources. When more consciously elaborated, they comprise an ideology, a point of view, a program for living or action vis-à-vis the world, and a catalyst to shape the world's future. (p. ix)

Ethnic identity and connection to ethnic communities are an expression of ethnicity, however, in Gomez-Quiñones' view, this can be a vital resource operating on a number of levels. The solidarity and support college students draw from connections to communities that are culturally relevant to their heritage may also serve as part of an ideology for their career, educational and life goals.

The Latino College Experience

Chickering (1969) and others have discussed identity development and developing one's autonomy as two essential tasks of the college student. College heralds a time of exploration when the individual develops a sense of autonomy from his/her parents. The college student is exposed to new people, new ideas and diverse perspectives stimulating a process of self-reflection integral to the formation of identity. Identity is a pervasive, multi-dimensional concept and its formation extends throughout the life cycle, located "in *the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*" (Erikson, 1968, p.22).

The process of identity formation is complex and relative to psychosocial characteristics. While we have every certainty that identity changes over the life cycle, its simultaneous and reflexive nature is elusive. Indeed, Erikson (1968) notes that the process of identity development is "luckily, and necessarily, for the most part unconscious except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful, or elated, 'identity consciousness'" (p. 23). Identity consciousness is often stimulated in students from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds upon entering predominately white institutions of higher education. Students, in Erikson's formulation of the identity process, judge themselves in light of how they perceive others to judge them. The end result is

that minority students become quite conscious of their own difference from the predominant white culture and others they may encounter during their college years. Identity is modified through the process of how students judge and integrate their own self-concept and core values (heritage, family, aspirations) with the concepts others hold of them. This process is the core of Mead's (1934) theory of the social self. Mead argues that self is formed through an internal dialogue between that part of the self acting out behaviors in social contexts, called the "I," and the part of the self, called the "me," which reflects on the actions of the "I." The symbolic interaction between the "I" and the "me," is essential to the individual's ability to understand how the self may be perceived or interpreted by others. Rhoads (1997b) notes that "the other is imagined in our minds as the 'generalized other' projecting cultural understandings of a society or social group with expectations for behavior" (p. 26).

Vincent Tinto (1987) forwards the theory that the key to the college student's success is effective academic and social integration through college as a rite of passage. Tinto's work examines the mechanisms that bond or integrate the student into the life of the institution and then extends them to build a systemic, theoretical conception of the student and postsecondary educational institutions. William Tierney (1992) criticizes Tinto as having misinterpreted the cultural definition of ritual. Tierney argues rites of passage are used to describe passage from one level of a culture to the next level of that same culture. Thus, Tinto's use of the term 'rite of passage' is flawed when used to refer to movement from one culture to another culture altogether. Second, Tierney argues "a model of integration that never questions who is to be integrated and how it is to be done assumes an individualist stance of human nature and rejects differences based on categories such as class, race and gender" (Tierney, 1992, p 285). The problem which arises from neglecting such differences implies a

polarity between collegiate success and socio-cultural heritage, as he explains Native American student success in higher education:

> Social integrationists have hypothesized that success in college is contingent upon an individual's ability to become academically and socially integrated into the life of the institution, a process that in part is predicated on the individual's ability to separate from previous communities. To utilize Tinto's Durkheimian formulation, the implicit assumption is that Native Americans will need to undergo a cultural suicide of sorts to avoid an intellectual suicide. (Tierney, 1992, p. 287)

Tierney's notion of cultural suicide is akin to the idea of a "cultural sellout," a common critique of individuals from disenfranchised backgrounds who have achieved academic and professional success. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argue that the result of long standing exclusion and discrimination is that minorities "develop a sense of collective identity or a sense of peoplehood in opposition to the social identity of white Americans due to the way white Americans treat them in economic, political, social, and psychological domains including white exclusion of these groups" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 180). Thus, to succeed in a white dominated educational system is to "sell out" your cultural identity, not as an American, but as a member of a minority community. Terms such as "coconut" (brown on the outside, white on the inside), "oreo," "banana" and "apple" emphasize the polarization of marginalized cultures so disenfranchised that success has become defined as a "white" cultural characteristic elusive to their own.

How then do Latino/a college students deal with an ethnic consciousness that comes from being labeled on the one hand as different from the dominant culture, and, on the other hand, risk exclusion from one's own community for becoming too like the dominant culture? Padilla (1997) provides excellent insight into the Latino/a students search for identity in a predominantly white institution through an ethnographic study of his course on the 'Sociology of Latino/a Culture and Identity.' Through their writings and conversations, Padilla's students share

how they negotiate their Latino/a identity with the "Americanness" that has come through assimilation and acculturation. Raquel, a student of Argentinean descent, writes of her wakening ethnic consciousness:

> As we discuss culture and identity in this society, it is important to consider to what degree are we (Latino/as) Americanized or assimilated. I live here. I have lived here all my life and I cannot deny that I have undergone some degree of assimilation. I cannot deny the "gringa" in me. So how do I define assimilation? How do I begin to sort out those aspects of assimilation that are desirable and those that are not? Do I want to be fully integrated or just marginally integrated? Is it possible for me to be bilingual and bicultural in the North American system? These are all questions that I have begun to ask myself for the first time. I had never before questioned myself in this way. (Padilla, 1997, p. 128)

Ethnic consciousness has stimulated the identity formation (or reformation) process in Raquel as she struggles to integrate her sense of self in relation to her heritage and American culture. This struggle is also evident in student's career aspirations and cross-cultural relationships. The following student, Gustavo, a Dominican/Mexican pre-law major, illustrates the tension between the student's cultural heritage and his aspirations for a career and higher economic status:

> I am going to law school. I care a lot for my Irish girlfriend. Does this mean I will deny my ethnicity if I marry her and attain upper-middle class status? I hope not because I want to teach my children about their heritage, certainly more than my parents taught me. I am determined that my children will speak Spanish and spend a lot of time with my Latino side of the family. I know that in a higher position in society I could do more for my people, but every indication says that upward mobility comes at cultural cost. (Padilla, 1997, p. 169)

Throughout the narratives in Padilla's work, a consciousness of ethnic heritage has stimulated a similarly conscious process of identity development as students sort out who they want to be in relation to their heritage and the goals and aspirations they have for their lives, their children, and their community. It seems clear that ethnic consciousness and identity are essential developmental aspects of the Latino/as college experience.

Based on her research of African American, Latino/a, and Asian American students, Ortiz (1997) suggests a four-step developmental process involving ethnic identity of college students. The first step involves identifying with the student's culture; the second step sees a decline in identity during high school years; the third step yields a renewal of ethnic identity due to contact with "co-ethnic peers" in the college years, and the fourth step suggests an integration of other cultures into one's own ethnic identity. Likewise, Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggest the importance of student subcultures in facilitating student development. "When students are encouraged to form friendships and to participate in communities that become meaningful subcultures, and when diversity of backgrounds and attitudes as well as significant interchanges and shared interests exist, development along all seven vectors is fostered" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 201). Astin (1977, 1993) forwards the hypothesis that the effects of college are mediated through the student's interaction with peers and faculty. Astin argues that the level and frequency of student exposure to a particular peer group will have a proportional effect on the student's development (Astin, 1993). Rhoads' (1994) study of gay men in college underscores how marginalized individuals construct group identities and communities through peer socialization and the formation of a student subculture or contraculture. Holland and Eisenhart (1990) argue that "students bring values and understandings from other realms of their lives and, together with other students, generate a system of meaning and practice in response to the social barriers they face" (p. 7). The co-ethnic peer associations described by Ortiz (1997) in stimulating the development or renewal of ethnic identity furthers the significance of peer influences in Latino college student identity. Clearly, peer communities and friendships are an important variable in any study of the student development process.

Ultimately the intersection of cultural and career identity suggests the complex and dependent nature of the individual and the social environment. Erikson (1968) argues that "we cannot separate personal growth and communal change, nor can we separate. . .the identity crisis in individual life and contemporary crises in historical development because the two help to define each other" (p. 23). Thus, in order to analyze vocational identity, we must also explore the relative relationships between the individual and the environment by critically examining the social and historical context in which the individual lives. Such a research concern suggests a flexible methodology capable of reformulating concepts and theories as data emerges. This, along with the call for narrative inquiries in vocational identity by Bordin (1984) and Vondracek (1992) suggest that qualitative methods may provide insight into the simultaneous interaction of variables in the identity process.

It is clear that existing research has been very limited in exploring career development in the context of social realities faced by Latino/a populations. Barriers arising from the lack economic, educational, and political opportunities impact students' perceptions of themselves and their aspirations for the future. The dynamic and interactive nature of the identity process through integration of social, cultural and career aspects of the self provides the foundation for this study. By exploring the intersection of cultural and career identity in Latino business students through their college experiences, we will gain insight into the complex process of how one integrates social and cultural expectations with the individual's aspirations for the future.

NOTES

[1] The term "Hispanic" is a politically constructed term for ethnicity, which originated in the 1970's efforts of the U.S. government to determine a standard classification system for race and ethnicity for bureaucratic and statistical reporting (Forbes, 1992; Hayes-Bautista & Chapa, 1987). These efforts, spearheaded by the work of Sklar and Cotter (1971, 1972), resulted in the creation of five racial-ethnic categories: *American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic*, and *White*. The 1978 U.S. federal government definition for Hispanic reads: "A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race." However, according to Federal Circular A-46, 1972, "these classifications should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature... they have been developed in response to needs expressed by both the executive branch and the Congress to provide for the collection and use of compatible, non-duplicated, exchangeable racial and ethnic data by federal agencies." Thus the term "Hispanic" can be seen primarily as a label used to manage demography and shape policy, which, in turn, has considerable influence on social institutions. The self-descriptor "Latino" can be seen as a term of community empowerment.

CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH DESIGN

This study focuses on the cultural and career identities of Mexican American business students at Michigan State University. The Eli Broad College of Business is one of the largest undergraduate business programs in the nation with an undergraduate enrollment of 5584 students in the fall of 1998. The population of Latino students comprises approximately 12.6 percent of the undergraduate minority business student population in the college and only 1.5 percent of the total undergraduate business student population. Chicano students account for .5 percent of the undergraduate business student population, although it may be slightly higher as some students of Mexican American heritage may choose to identify ethnically under the category "Other Hispanic." Latino business students at Michigan State are acutely aware that Latinos are a very small group within the university they attend. Latino students are also aware that their position as a minority population is usually overlooked in deference to the much larger African American population on campus, as are the Asian American and Native American student populations. This study examines how students' awareness of the Latino condition in higher education, business, and society informs some of the actions they take in their career aspirations, their associations with others, and their identity as a Mexican American or Latino/a. In essence, we explore how students mediate structural conditions through awareness of their culture and societal position.

The issue of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) is a core issue in the constructing a career identity and engaging in the culture surrounding that career. For example, as students struggle to establish themselves in their major field of study, they also begin to engage in the culture of their intended

profession, adapting norms and behaviors consistent with the vision of the person they want to be. However, structural barriers associated with ethnicity, race, gender, and class may mediate the effects of self-efficacy in constructing a career identity. This suggests that there may be unique concerns in how ethnic and racial minorities develop career and vocational identity. An exploration of how college students from historically disenfranchised groups mediate barriers arising through the intersection of cultural and career identity has important implications for our ability to foster the student development process in higher education.

I turn now to a discussion of the specific research question, the rationale for a qualitative research approach, justification of the sample and selection criteria, and an outline of the data collection process and analysis.

Research Question and Variables for the Study:

> *How does the intersection of career and cultural identity influence the career development of Mexican American business students through their college years?*

Based on the above research question, preliminary identification of variables for the study is central to developing a grounded sense of the intersection of cultural and career identity. While the variables identified at the outset of the inquiry provide a focus for the process of discovery, it is possible that other salient variables emerge as the research is conducted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985b; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Emergent variables will be discussed in the summary of data and implications for future study. The primary focus of inquiry, or the dependent variable, are the meanings and values Mexican American students attribute to their emerging career identities. In order to understand these meanings and values through the lens of the students' cultural identity, I explored the following: 1) general demographic information such as ethnicity,

gender, age, race, year in school in order to describe the individual's context within social structures; 2) the individual's aspirations for their career; 3) the cultural influence of the family such as family expectations and values; 4) the cultural influence of peer associations and values arising from those associations; 5) ethnic consciousness as evidenced through involvement in ethnic issues, organizations, and communities; 6) experiences arising from college and work which may shape the students perceptions of barriers and their expectations for the future; and 7) self-efficacy. It is acknowledged that other relevant variables may emerge throughout the investigation of the research question. Appendices I and II contain the interview protocol and a chart that describes the relationship between protocol questions and the variables listed above.

Methodology

Qualitative methods of inquiry are best suited to study the intersection of cultural identity and career development in the college experience of Mexican American students as such methods support discovery of individual experiences and identity. Identity is derived from the meanings and values students develop about themselves through their lived experiences and perceptions of their social world. As identity is dynamic and interactive, we expect it to be modified as individuals encounter different contexts in their lives. This study focuses on *how* students' values and meanings related to their cultural identity influence their career development during college. The setting for the study is the real-life context of a college campus during the students' college years. As students reflect on experiences relating to their cultural and career identities, it is the pattern of individual identity that is of central interest. That is, how does the student make sense of the various factors that may influence identity as s/he pursues educational and career goals in college?

Phenomenological approaches reveal patterns, life processes, and meanings in the career actions of individuals (Brown & Brooks, 1990). According to Rhoads (1997a) "A phenomenological approach suggests an interrogation of human behavior and self-reflection; it involves situating human activity not simply as a means to some higher level ends, but as part of a process of creating meaning." (p. 508). Thus, as the study focuses on the contemporary, dynamic phenomena of identity development and relative meanings within real-life contexts, qualitative methods allow the flexibility to explore multiple interacting psycho-social factors which influence emergent identity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985a; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Yin, 1994).

Finally, the study, grounded in developmental theories of career identity, fills a significant gap in the body of literature on Mexican American college student development. As noted earlier, Vondracek (1992) points out that there is a scarcity of exploratory studies describing the individual's career development process within specific environments. Arbona (1990) notes that qualitative studies on Latinos are practically non-existent.

Data Collection Tools

A variety of data collection tools were used to develop a better understanding of the intersection of cultural identity and career development among Latino college students. Additionally, I sought to increase the reliability of the findings through corroboration among multiple data tools. Data was primarily collected through structured personal interviews. Supplementary data relevant to understanding the intersection cultural identity and career development was obtained from observations of students participating in undergraduate Latino business student organization meetings and activities. Additionally, my background as an adviser with Multicultural Business Programs provided salient historical perspectives relevant in exploring stimuli and expressions of career

and cultural identity through college experiences. Some contextual and incidental information was gained through students' personal web pages; campus editorial and news articles; and public documents such as flyers and mass e-mail announcements produced by students.

The Sample and Site

The sample for this study was comprised of 17 students with 30 or more earned credit hours who identified as Chicano or Mexican American majoring in business at Michigan State University during the fall of 1998. Students were identified from a list of 113 Chicano/Other Hispanic students with declared business majors enrolled for the 1998-1999 academic year at Michigan State University. Of these 113, approximately 44 students identified as Chicano or Mexican American. Efforts were made to comprise a representative sample based on gender, class level and other demographic and geographic factors, however most of the students who participated in the study came from students who knew me and peer referral. While the participant group of 17 students may seem small, it should be recognized that it accounts for 38.6% of the students eligible for the study.

The sample was confined to Mexican Americans, for two reasons. First, the heterogeneity of Latino populations requires attention to the differences in the history and social experiences of specific Latino groups in the U.S. While specific subgroups may identify with a panethnic Latino identity, Padilla (1985) points out that such identification is situational and does not supplant the individual's primary ethnic identity as Mexican American, Puerto Rican or others. Secondly, Mexican Americans are not only the largest Latino population in the U.S., but are also the most under-represented in achieving at least a baccalaureate degree. According to Census figures, only 5.9 percent of Mexican Americans had earned a bachelor's degree or more (Montgomery, 1994). That is

not to suggest that panethnic Latino studies should not be undertaken, merely that there needs to be a sharper focus given to primary ethnic identity in initial studies so that panethnic differences or similarities may be more readily discovered in future enquiries.

The study focuses on students majoring in business for a number of reasons. First, business is considered a professional-technical field similar to engineering, math and science in which retention of under-represented students is a national concern. Second, the setting at Michigan State University has an active Chicano/Mexican American student community, an active Latino business student community, and a minority academic and career support program in business. Further, my position as an insider in the Latino business community with established trust was also an important factor in selecting the site. My interactions with Latino business students since 1987, facilitated research perspectives beyond the structured interviews through participant observation. Participant observation is an important corroboration tool for data collected in interviews as the research can look for consistency between what the subject said and how they interact in the social environments pertinent to the study. Being able to corroborate data through multiple methods enhances the reliability and validity of the study. The confluence of these elements at a single research site afforded a unique opportunity to study the influence of community, peer associations, and academic support at a predominately White institution where Latinos are severely under-represented.

There are several organizations which are important to describe to enhance the reader's understanding of contextual factors present at the site at Michigan State University. Further, a discussion of my roles within minority support programs and with Latino students is essential to be forthcoming with perspectives and biases I bring to the research process.

Multicultural Business Programs (MBP)

Multicultural Business Programs was established in 1986 as an academic and career support unit in the college of business to foster the recruitment and retention of minority students as business majors. The plural title of the unit is meant to reflect the variety of programs it offers for student support such as academic, career and personal advising; tutorial services; summer bridge and career exploration programs; as well as student leadership development in business student organizations. The two oldest student organizations associated with the unit are Multicultural Business Students (100+ members) and the campus chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants (20-30 members), both of which actually pre-date the existence of MBP itself. My roles as an MBP staff member between 1990 and 1999 included coordinating tutorial services, managing summer programs, student staff training, as well as individual and student organization advising. More salient to this study, I also served as a catalyst in helping students create a business student organization for Native American and Latino business students.

Native American and Hispanic Business Students (NAHBS)

Native American and Hispanic Business Students (NAHBS) is a professional student organization which seeks to build a supportive network among Latino and Native American students at Michigan State University. NAHBS evolved from outreach efforts through Multicultural Business Programs in the Eli Broad College of Business at Michigan State University. In 1991, I, along with two co-ethnic peer counselors held the first informal meeting of Native American and Latino business students. Approximately 10 students attended, two Native American students and eight Latino students none of whom knew each other. Conversations at that first meeting covered a variety of topics, however the one most striking was that students talked candidly about it being

easier to "blend" into the predominantly white student population than connect with other Latinos in the college. Further, the minority student organizations and Multicultural Business Programs in the college were seen primarily as "black" organizations and support programs not particularly approachable or knowledgeable of Latino issues. Students talked about being a minority within a minority as they felt most minority programs on campus were geared primarily toward black students. Between 1991 and 1993, various business majors with Native American and Latino heritage met informally and served primarily as a support group. However, after attending the National Hispanic Business Student Leadership Conference in Austin, Texas in 1994, the group became officially chartered as the first chapter of the National Hispanic Business Association in Michigan. The National Hispanic Business Association (NHBA) is a professional association founded by students at the University of Texas-Austin and currently has 25 chapters in 10 states. The annual NHBA leadership conference generally draws over 600 students from colleges through the United States.

Incorporating as a registered student organization and national charter of NHBA, NAHBS acknowledged under-representation of Hispanics and Native Americans in business and in the campus community. E-mail is the primary mode of official communication among group members and is used to announce meetings, fundraisers, outreach activities, and socials; news from NHBA; announcements from other Latino student groups, other minority business organizations and advisers; scholarship and job opportunities. The executive board governs the agenda for meetings and guest speakers. Meetings have an organized but informal tone. Guest speakers have ranged from Latino and Native American alumni, to the director of the Latino studies program on campus, to corporate representatives speaking on networking, interviewing and resume writing. The group regularly engages in fundraisers toward professional

conference travel, community service activities, social events and outreach activities for Native and Latino high school students. However, the main thrust of the organization centered on their goal to attend the national Hispanic business student conference held each February.

All 17 participants in the study have attended at least one NAHBS meeting and all but three would describe themselves as active members of the organization. Members of the group come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, however the two most predominant cultural backgrounds are Mexican American and Puerto Rican. Others come from Dominican, Brazilian, Guatamalan, and Colombian heritage. While members of the group interact in a variety of contexts on campus ranging from classes to career fairs to cultural events to parties, their involvement in NAHBS has a significant impact on their career identity as business majors and their cultural identity on campus. NAHBS is a salient influence on students' career and cultural identity that appears to be both an expression of and a catalyst for identity development.

Culturas de las Razas Unidas (CRU)

Culturas de las Razas Unidas (CRU) is the largest Hispanic registered student organization on campus. The organization represents the diverse Latino community, Mexican-American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican and other Hispanics/Latinos and is integrated into the organizational structure of University diversity resources and student government. CRU holds seats on the Council of Racial and Ethnic Students (CORES) and the Associated Students of Michigan State University, both voting bodies on academic and university community issues. The group brings together Latino students, faculty and staff to exchange ideas, discuss issues, and provide cultural, academic and social programming for the community. CRU is generally regarded as the central Latino

student organization on campus, a hub for the network of other Latino organizations on campus.

Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlan (MEXA)

Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlan (MEXA) is an activist political group of students advancing Chicano issues on campus and in the local community. The Michigan State chapter of MEXA is also active in the national arena. Linked to similar organizations throughout the country, the organization hosted a national conference for other MEXA chapters in 1997. Although it is not an officially registered student organization, MEXA and CRU officers have been known to hold offices in both organizations. The organization has championed the establishment of a Chicano Studies program on campus, a Cesar Chavez Library collection, in addition to being a vocal advocate for social, economic and health issues affecting migrant farm worker communities. MEXA is has been regarded as a radical group on campus due to their methods of political activism. In an effort to have the University join the United Farm Workers grape boycott, members of the group smashed grapes on the university president's desk (Hudson, 1998) and engaged in a water only hunger strike which resulted in medical treatment. More recently, in fighting for the Chicano Studies program, MEXA members checked out over 4,500 books from the university library which limited access to key intellectual resources for all students to make their point. (Hughes, 2000). In addition to their political successes, MEXA makes the following unverified claim the following regarding their members:

> We have a 99% graduation rate and boast alumni who have become Americorps volunteers, United Farm Worker organizers, graduate school attendees, daily newspaper reporters, organizers, graduate school attendees, nurses and doctors. (http://www.jsri.msu.edu/cls/resources.html)

Data Management and Analysis

All individual interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by professional transcription services or the researcher. Those which were professionally transcribed were then checked by the researcher for accuracy with the original audiotape and corrected as necessary. After the transcription of the interview, the transcripts were reviewed thematically and coded to identify issues and other units of meaning central to the focus of inquiry. Information from the researcher's historical observations and field notes compared with the thematically coded transcripts. Issues, emergent themes and patterns were checked with participants as well as by co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic colleagues to provide for both a "member check" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985a) and a professional research check. The member checks were a means of authenticating the data to assure accurate description of experiences within cultural contexts. The professional research check verified accuracy and consistency of the data between taped interview, transcription and written interpretation in order to enhance the internal reliability of the study.

Confidentiality. To protect the confidentiality of the informants, pseudonyms were assigned to each study participant. In addition, names of places and organizations were changed to protect the confidentiality of the respondents. Students participating in the interviews were informed of the study's goals and signed an informed consent form in accordance with university human subjects research procedures.

The primary focus of analysis was to develop an understanding of the meaning students construct around their cultural heritage and how such constructions influence career choices and their evolving professional identity. The following questions guided the analysis of the data:

1) *What personal and social factors shape students' conceptions of a professional business identity? What is the relative importance of these factors?*

2) *How do the Latino student's college experiences facilitate change in the development of a professional identity?*

3) *How do students mediate differences between cultural and professional value systems, if they exist?*

4) *Do new cultural systems emerge from the intersection of cultural and professional identity in Latino business students?*

These questions served as the basis for the researcher's decisions regarding the inclusion and exclusion of data central to the primary research question.

Reliability and Validity

Methodologies and beliefs derived from quantitative scientific research have traditionally been accepted as a means for establishing authority. One such belief is the importance of objectivity in establishing validity which yields to an idealized conception of a researcher who is able to remove all traces of individual bias from his/her work. Struggles for researcher objectivity in qualitative research have driven numerous researchers to suppress their own voice in favor of the illusion of neutrality in third person narrative. Other qualitative researchers may adapt lengthy discussions of methodology to bolster their claim to scientific objectivity and hence, authority. However, qualitative research is grounded in the fact that the researcher is a positioned subject inextricable from the context of the study. The researcher's interpretations are bound by her personal equation, as Margaret Mead has suggested. Research interpretations "are the judgments of one individual upon a mass of data, many of the most significant aspects, by their very nature, can be known to only herself (Mead, 1928, p. 13)." In approaching my research, I have endeavored to actively question and confront my biases as they are exposed through the research process. This is especially important, I believe, for researchers who are engaged

in cultural studies different from their own cultural heritage. Ultimately, the validity of the interpretations I present in the study must be drawn from the authenticity of the findings which have undergone appropriate triangulation (Denzin, 1989, p. 236).

Reliability of the data depends on the faithfulness and accuracy in describing the experiences of one's subjects. Authenticity conveys authority in that an authentic work is real, true, original, or genuine; in other words, "worthy of belief." This notion parallels the discussion of "trustworthiness," the believability of the researcher's findings in Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Several techniques were used to check the authenticity of the themes and patterns which emerge throughout the study. First, data were drawn from a variety of sources: interviews, observations, correspondence, web pages and other student produced media. Corroboration of data among multiple sources adds to the reliability of the findings. Where there may be divergence between data sources and informants, efforts were made to verify the credibility of the data through appropriate triangulation and member checks. As I analyzed the interviews and supplementary data, a few participants were asked to clarify my understanding of some of the emergent themes to insure interpretive validity. Second, the data and analysis from the individual interviews and supplementary data was checked through co-ethnic and non co-ethnic sources to insure authenticity in describing cultural experiences and the accuracy and validity of my interpretations.

As an exploratory study, the ability to generalize here is not a goal. While the data may influence and inform the readers' educational theory and practice, generalizability is bound by the limitations of time and context. This is especially salient for the study of identity. Multiple conceptions of reality are expected in the outcomes of the study based on the particularness of individual participants'

identity and experiences. In presenting the data, I use a narrative form to bring the reader into the world of the students. In doing so, I have sought not only to identify common themes in the students' cultural and career identities, but their uniquenesses as well.

In concluding our discussion of research validity, I suggest that validity in qualitative research is derived from the authenticity in the researcher's account through the researcher's observational, intellectual and emotional responsiveness toward her subject. Validity in qualitative research is also drawn from the researcher's willingness to reflect on herself in her interpretive process as she constructs meaning from the data. As readers we seek to learn through the researcher's insight. Perhaps what we seek is not authority in the qualitative account, but merely the opportunity to peer through various windows on ourselves.

Perhaps, ultimately, we arrive at a paradox: to know is not to know or, to know is to continually question what we know in the search of deeper meaning and understanding. Perhaps authority in qualitative research comes from our willingness to question our realities as we have come to know them --- to open our senses in order to perceive differences in our world and bring them to bear on our understanding of ourselves. As Charles Taylor said: "A study of the science of man is inseparable from an examination of the options between which men must choose" (Taylor, 1971, p. 76). How then can one claim authority in a process that is continually open to question and choice? From my perspective, an effective qualitative researcher shares with her readers the process by which she has come to understand her subject. She discusses her reasons for choosing her subject of study and provides a justification for her work. She is frank about her methodologies and acknowledges limitations openly. She brings various levels of inquiry to her work and seeks to understand her subjects from

within their own culture as much as she is able. She engages her readers in her quest for understanding and enlightenment, communicating in a prose that draws her readers into the senses of the world she has set to explore. And in all these things, she shares mostly herself, her unique personal equation that allows her readers a perspective on themselves. Validity comes not from a single standard, but from acknowledging the many processes we have to understand ourselves. I turn now to a discussion of the data and the findings which emerged from the study.

CHAPTER 4:

Intersections of Career and Cultural Identity

With every college major there are certain images or stereotypes that can influence one's perceptions of what it means to be a major in that field of study. The same is true for careers and professions beyond college. Common images of business majors are that they love money, are goal driven, competitive, and probably more Republican than Democrat. Personality influences career choice as is evident through the research on trait and factor vocational theories. Clearly social images and experiences may influence both career and cultural identity, but what of personal values, goals and aspirations that help us build the vision of who we would like to be?

Theorists such as Holland have described the process of career selection and choice as being one of personality. Indeed, personality testing and temperament indices have a long and distinguished position in the psychology of career and vocational development work. For our discussion, I take personality as an expression of identity in social environments. Some interesting questions arise as we consider the intersection of identity and perceptions of social roles that approximate the old paradox: What came first? The chicken or the egg? Does identity influence one's perception of social roles? Do social roles influence the development of one's identity? Perhaps they influence each other dynamically.

A foundation for understanding career and vocational identity is drawn from the work of Super and Holland. Holland's (1973) theory of vocational choice is based on the individual's personality type as described below:

> Each type is the product of a characteristic interaction between a variety of cultural and personal forces, including peers, parents, social class, culture, and the physical environment. Out of this experience, a person first learns to first prefer some activities as

> opposed to others. Later, these activities become strong interests. Such interests lead to a special group of competencies. Finally, a person's interests and competencies create a particular personal disposition that leads him to think, perceive, and act in certain ways (p. 2).

Holland's theory involves comparing the attributes of a person with his set of personality model types, the combination of which becomes a personality pattern suggesting a range of vocational choices congruent with others of a similar pattern. Super's approach differs from Holland's in that Super constructs a developmental theory of careers and vocational identity based on a series of tasks as individuals explore their career options, make career choices, enter their chosen occupation, and adjust to the world of work.

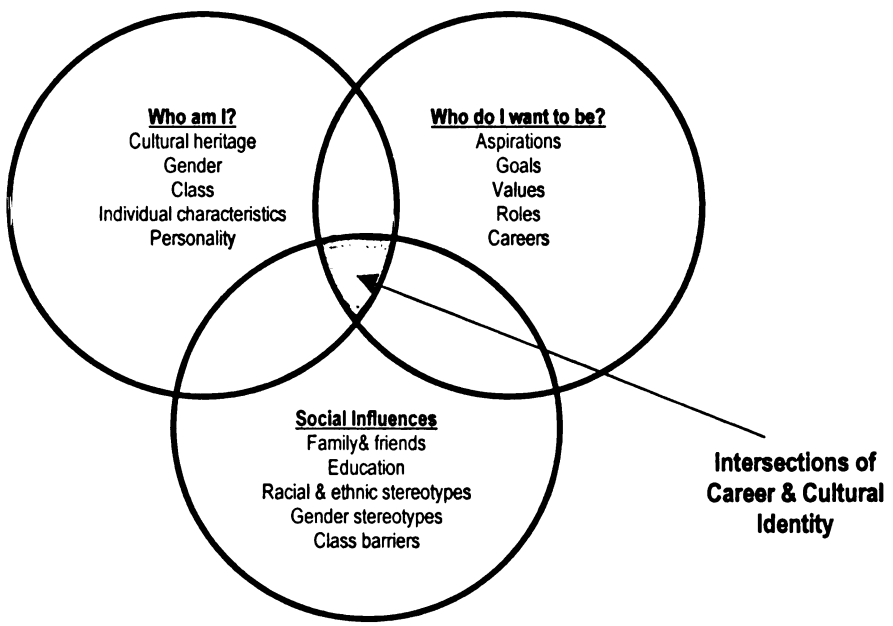
As you will recall from the literature discussion in Chapter 2, Super's (1957, 1985, 1996) theory involves self-concept at both the psychological and social levels. The psychological component refers to a personal process in which individuals make life choices and adapt to them. The social component focuses on how the individual perceives his/her options within prevailing socioeconomic environment. Super also incorporates the idea of life stages into his vocational theory (exploration, establishment, maintenance and decline), suggesting different developmental needs at different times of the individual's life. College students generally fit into what Super defines as the exploratory stage, a stage in which adolescents explore their vocational interests through role-playing, school curricula, peer and other social groups, as well as part-time work experiences. Super notes that the adolescent exploration process is not often conscious or systematic, unless structured by an attending organization. "Social exploration is more spontaneous and parent or peer stimulated, and occupational career exploration often rides on that" (Super, Savickas & Super, 1996).

Taking the developmental process a bit futher, Bandura's social learning theory and concept of self-efficacy are also salient factors in emerging identity

patterns. As students master new life roles, such as being a student, a member of a cultural peer group, and a professional intern, their self-confidence grows which reinforces both self-concept and career choice. In order to determine the influence of ethnic identity in the dynamic process of identity development, Bandura suggests that "an understanding of how ethnicity contributes to career choice and development is best advanced by process analyses that link socio-structural determinants, mediating psychological mechanisms, and occupational pursuits (1997, p. 438).

In order to make sense of the complex and dynamic interplay of psychological, sociostructural and aspiration factors influencing identity, I suggest the conceptual model in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model for Intersections of Career and Cultural Identity



The model serves to posit the intersections of career and cultural identity between these three forces influence. This model is not meant to be comprehensive, merely a guide to organize influences on the intersections of

career and cultural identity as students express their thoughts and experiences as Mexican American business majors in college.

I am who I am. Cultural Identity and Meaning

What does cultural identity mean? Alma said that if you asked her that a few years ago she wouldn't have known what to say. Born in Mexico and immigrating with her family to the US as a child, she didn't feel she had to "step into" her cultural identity, it was just there. However, through her life experiences in the U.S., Alma learned that:

> people are so classified by their roots or their race or their traditions or what have you that I feel that it is important for me to know who I am. And for me to be proud of who I am and I mean that's me. I'm Latino. I'm Mexican...I don't care if people call me Latino or Mexican or Chicano or what have you. You know, I *know* who I am. And I feel very proud of it and, pretty much if I get the chance to, I'll tell everybody who wants to know. [laughs]

The positive self-concept Alma expresses in talking about her identity is mirrored in all of the other students in the study: *I am who I am*. The surety students' feel about themselves provides an important foundation for their steps toward careers in business.

Success in college and in their careers takes on important cultural and family dimensions for all of the students in the study. Whether it is being the first in their family to attend college or first to have a chance at a professional career, students talked about the meaning their success as Mexican American business students would have to their families and their cultural communities. For Eliana, a first-generation student from a migrant farming background, her college and career success are "very important 'cuz there aren't a lot of minorities that actually graduate from college and get their degree and have those big-time paying jobs out there. I just wanted to get my degree so I could help all my family."

The potential to give back to one's community and to serve as a role model for others is another prevalent theme in the students' vision of what is means to be a successful business student. Christian aspires to be on a Board of Directors one day, although he said few Latinos have been able to achieve that goal. "I would love to be a role model," he said, "I'd love to come back and just talk to people and tell them my experiences that I've had in the business world." For Christian, being role model as an important strike against negative stereotypes. As more role models come for Latinos in the future, Christian thinks it will be easier for Latinos to:

> see that things can be done, and possibilities are endless, and hopefully that people change their minds about stereotypes and racism in the future. I can see it changing, I mean, but you look at the last movie "Zorro." They portray Mexican Americans as people with dirt on their face, and this is the 20th century, a 1998 movie, you know? That's not the way Mexican Americans are. We're not dirty people, but this is what people go to that movie and see. Thousands, millions. I don't even know how many people have seen it. It's just those type of stereotypes that have to change, and once the people change, it has to come in your mind first, and then try to overcome what other people think, and once those two come together, it's looking pretty good, but still there are so many things to do.

The students in this study are pioneers of sorts, treading where a disproportionate number of Latinos have gone before. As business majors, there is a feeling that their success will help pave the road for Latinos to follow in their path. As a recent Latino business alumnus shared with members of the Native American and Hispanic Business Students, "if I can work my way up the corporate ladder I will have the power and money to make a difference in my community -- to be able to give back and change things for the better." What then lies on the path Mexican American business students' travel as they develop their career identity and work toward success?

Social images of occupations and career path decisions

The process of identity involves a negotiation between internal desires and the external roles one sees played in society. For example, the internal desire to help others and care for the sick is compared with roles the individual perceives will help fulfill that desire such as doctor or nurse. There are also other elements at work as one observes others in social and occupational roles. The observed and perceived outcomes of a given occupation in terms of income, lifestyle, and social status also influence one's cognitive interpretation of a career path in that occupation. Career aspirations and choices frequently arise from these negotiations. In exploring career options, students were heavily influenced by the social images they held of certain occupations.

Olga was always expected to attend college, as her parents were both teachers. Education was highly valued in her home, however her career choice appeared to be more influenced by her material values. Her parents just said, "You can go to school wherever you want, but just keep in mind that we're not rich." In middle school, Olga knew she wanted to be in business. She could see being a successful businesswoman in the future, yet she really didn't know what she wanted to do in business. She associated it with being well off.

> I knew I wanted to make money. I wanted to make a lot of money, and my uncle had run a very profitable automotive shop business. They are very well to do. They have a few garages, and they sell parts and things... I saw their house, and they just had tons of stuff, and I just thought, "Wow, I want to do that. I want to have a lot of money, because it's great if you could get what you wanted and not have to ask anybody. You could go on vacation." And I thought, "This is so cool."

Visualizing yourself in a role is a powerful influence in career decision-making. Raised in inner city Detroit by his single mother, Andres and his family struggled to make ends meet. Living in buildings where they could hear rats in the walls, Andres' mom worked two jobs just to make sure the family had enough

to make rent and eat. The neighborhood was rough. Andres' mother forbade the children from going out when she wasn't at home. Initially, television and his "fighting" spirit inspired Andres' career thoughts: "From when I was little, I wanted to be a lawyer. I don't know if it was like L.A. Law on TV, or whatever was going on, but I love arguing. I love arguing 'cuz I like winning arguments." However, going to college as a pre-law major made him rethink his plans. "Two days into it I didn't like it. It wasn't, wasn't the kind of law that I thought, I mean, I don't know. I think that major goes about law in a different way, it goes all the way around and then puts you back in it." He drifted toward the business school and briefly entertained being an accountant, but didn't like that either. Andres eventually decided on Supply Chain Management after talking to some upper classmen at a career fair. "So that's just where I ended up and I love it. I love it totally so it worked out in the end I guess." Reflecting on his decision, Andres' says he envisioned himself in the future in "a shirt and tie carrying a briefcase, walking into a business office," but he admits:

> I had no idea what I wanted to do. I knew I didn't want to be like a teacher or, you know, a biologist, a doctor, or anything. I knew I didn't want any of that. So I don't know. Business was just like the next choice. I think business is so broad that you can end up doing so many different things. Once you get in there you can just start manipulating and maneuvering. So that's where I went.

For Andres, the choice of a career in business came as a default from other career options he had ruled out, but it certainly was consistent with the social and economic vision he had for his future. Perhaps more importantly, below the surface of social images, Andres sees the field of business as flexible enough to engage his diverse interests through enterprising and self-determined means. The integration of social images with individual work values such as flexibility and self-direction are salient elements in building career identity.

Astin's (1977) assertion that college students are more engaged primarily in implementing a career rather than choosing one seems especially relevant as we consider the implications of how students integrate social images of careers in their development process. For example, Angela is the youngest of three girls. Her father, a skilled-trade worker, worked 12 hour days and several jobs to put all three of his daughters through college. After seeing her oldest sister get accepted to college, Angela began to look at herself and her achievements. That's when she started pushing herself academically and began looking at possibilities for her own future. In middle school, Angela found herself drawn to business:

> What you see on TV is the only time I really saw what I wanted to be...women in business suits like, you know, carrying briefcases and working on laptop computers...that really attracted me and then it was like, okay, so what do they do.

There are two motivational factors evident in Angela's academic and career decision-making. Academically, Angela is motivated by her sister's academic achievement believing if her sister can be successful, so can she. This efficacy belief is stimulated by what Bandura calls "vicarious experience," the process of appraising one's personal capacities in relationship to peer achievements. The social image she holds of a professional businesswoman influences her career identity process as she begins to take steps to become that woman. Both of these factors are essential as Angela implements her career choice.

Contexts and identity development

Identity is more than just the sum of parts that rise to the surface. Identity development is contextual and reciprocally influenced by the individual's interaction with the world in which they live. As discussed in Chapter 2, Vondracek (1986; 1992) suggests analysis should stem from the individual at the center through various subsystems of influence such as family, school, peers, and workplace to larger societal systems stemming from cultural values.

According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, individuals are both producers and products of social systems. In order to understand the complex interplay of the student as producer and as product, we must first explore the family and cultural contexts which precede the further development of cultural and career identity in college.

Family demographics

Most of the student's parents or grandparents came to Michigan in search of work, either in the factories or on farms employing seasonal migrant workers. Only two of the students participating in the study came from families who were actively working on migrant farm routes. In both cases, the students and at least some of their family settled out in communities within 30 miles of Michigan State University. Generally, construction or automotive factory work became the source of income for men (fathers, uncles, and brothers) from both for first-generation and second-generation families settling out from the migrant life. Mothers' occupations were highly variable. Several worked in clerical, health assistant or childcare roles, while others worked in domestic cleaning, and temporary farm and factory work. Only one student's mother worked in a business field as a materials buyer. The educational level of parents varied considerably, however not without a certain pattern. Second or third generation parents tended to have a minimum of a high school degree, with only 8 parents holding a college baccalaureate degree, and only two of these were degrees in business. Of the college-educated parents, three (two men and one woman) hold master's degrees and held positions in education as a licensed counselor, a school principal and a teacher, respectively. Another college-educated father working in the automotive industry did advanced coursework in executive education. First-generation parents had educational levels that varied from no education to some college, with most achieving a minimum 6th grade education.

While eight of seventeen students' families have some connection to migrant work, only two students came from active migrant working families. Their educational and cultural experiences are unique due to their life on the migrant trail. Both faced barriers in fragmented education, language, and poverty that were not characteristic of other students in the study. We turn now to look more closely at their experiences.

The Migrant Life

The experiences of migrant farm working families are relatively unique within American society. Families move from farm to farm as work dictates earning minimal wages and living in camps or temporary housing that have historically been sub-standard. Being transitory in nature, migrant communities tend to have sporadic access to education, health care and other services. In addition, the hazards of working fields with high volumes of pesticides and herbicides have posed significant health related concerns championed by the United Farmworkers and advocate Cesar Chavez. Migrant communities have typically represented a distinct underclass of the American public.

Eliana and Carlos both lived a migrant life, traveling with their families along seasonal farming routes. Life in the migrant camps revolved around working the fields to support the family, with little or no value given to education. Yet both Eliana and Carlos turned to education as a way of improving not only their lives, but also those of their families.

Eliana was one of nine children born to parents who worked the fields as their parents did before them. Neither parent went to school or learned to read. Eliana's family traveled migrant routes from Florida, to the Carolinas, to Michigan to as far away as Washington State, wherever there was work to be found. All of her brothers and sisters were expected to work in the fields to help out the family. Getting an education was secondary to work, at her father's insistence:

> It was really hard. We never got to finish school. We would jump back and forth, for one grade we'd have to repeat another grade if we went somewhere else because it depended on the district, and we would go to Mexico, go to school there, come back over here. They wouldn't accept our grades from Mexico so we had to do the grade over again. So it was really hard, and my dad would sometimes just not let us go to school and we would have to help them work.

Eliana's mother had different hopes for her children that caused a number of arguments with her husband. She wanted them to get an education so they could get better jobs to help the family. Only three of her children finished high school, although all of them eventually left the migrant trail. Her sons found jobs in construction, while her oldest daughters chose to raise their own families. The three youngest, including Eliana, went on to college. Eliana was the first to make the decision.

> When I decided to go to college, I guess it was hard to hear my dad say, "Why are you going to college?' He was disappointed that I was going to college and so I was expecting like everybody to be -- how do you say? -- congratulating me, saying "Oh, I'm so proud of you and this and that," but it was really nobody saying that to me. It was just kinda hard and I had to do it on my own.

Although Eliana's mother really doesn't understand the experiences Eliana is having in college, she asks questions about her classes and is pleased she is getting an education. Eliana's brothers laugh and joke with her about making "big bucks" one day and she sees that as their way of their way of expressing support.

Carlos and his sister were raised by his mother, his father having left the family when he was only four years old. Carlos traveled with his mother, her two sisters and seven brothers through Mexico, Florida, Texas, and Michigan until he was about six or seven years old. She settled in a small town and got a job through a friend. Times were hard; she struggled to make ends meet with a little child support and welfare money. In the summers, when the rest of the family

would return to Michigan, Carlos and his sister would work the fields with their aunts, uncles and cousins.

The one-stoplight town Carlos grew up in was almost exclusively white; only three other Latino families lived nearby. It was a town in which everyone knew everyone else. Carlos said he didn't feel different growing up there as one of the few Mexican families in town "only because I didn't let other people's perspective get in my way. Either that or I just didn't pay attention, I think that's more or less what it was."

Carlos readily described himself as stubborn, although self-determined might be better word. Reflecting on family expectations, he sheds insight on his character and decision to go to college:

> Basically, they really didn't have expectations, to tell the truth, and being a migrant worker, being a migrant working family, that's not your assumption, that you have your kids go to college. My mom never told me, "You've got to go to college." She never emphasized that. I did it because I was determined to do it, and it was something I wanted to do because of the family status and the way I want my kids to live. So that's my determination to go to college. I didn't know how I was going to get there, because I didn't have the knowledge or resources to obtain those things, so basically, they really didn't emphasize school. It was probably one of the things they emphasized the least. I think they emphasized family values and respecting your elders and your brothers and sisters. Respecting your moms and taking care of them when they get old, and these are the type of things that you see in the migrant worker families, and that's why you don't see that many migrant worker students going to college.

When Carlos and his sister started school in Michigan, neither could speak English at all. They struggled to learn; both flunked kindergarten, because their language skills were not up to the school's standards. Despite the early setback, Carlos enjoyed learning and liked to challenge his mind. He described himself as a thinker, however his decision to go to college came more as a response to his skills in the field. Although Carlos spent a good number of summers working in the fields or helping in construction, his uncles and cousins chided him for being "a nerd," because he did well in school.

> I was never good with my hands, so I couldn't do any of the construction work or anything that involved using your hands. I wasn't very good at it, so I started thinking about, "What can I do that I don't have to use my hands?" And I was always using my mind, so I figured education was the way to go. But I didn't know exactly how I was going to do it, and I wanted to go to college, but I didn't really have a clear cut exactly what I wanted to be.

Carlos' decision process involves both mastery and vicarious experience described by Bandura (1986). By measuring his field skills against those of his more able family members and building on his own mastery experiences in education, Carlos' decision to go to college was consistent with a developmental state of self-efficacy. For both Carlos and Eliana, college represented a step into an unknown world with vague ideas about what they wanted to do. Yet, for both, education represented a way of life with wider opportunities and the ability to help their families. Carlos and Eliana described themselves as "stubborn" people, however the stubbornness they describe is more closely akin to self-determination to meet their educational goals. The highest expectation they have for themselves comes from within. For other students in the study, parental expectations played a larger role in their educational and life choices.

Parents' Expectations

Most parents hold hopes and dreams for the lives for their children. Nearly all of the students in the study draw a great deal of confidence and security from their parents' supportive nature, with the notable exception of Eliana's father. Although parents' may not always understand the challenges college and a business career choice present to their children, they certainly hold a high value for education and their child's happiness.

Carmen is the third of four daughters. Her oldest stepsister graduated from college, her next older sister takes classes at junior college. Carmen's reflection on her parents' expectations is typical of most of the students in the study:

> It was never said you are going to go to college, but I think it was known. It was just known that you were going to go. So I never felt pressured to excel and just be all like that. But I think that was the thing. They never pressured us and said "you must do good in school and you must do this and you must do that." They just let us grow as people and, you know, when we needed guidance, they were there. I think we had a very open relationship.

According to the students, their parents (with one notable exception to be discussed shortly) hold high values for education, and most importantly, their children's happiness. Students generally described an intuitive sense of knowing they were going to go to college or further their education in some way, although some parents were more overt in expressing their expectations.

Nina, a junior majoring in human resources had a very stable childhood and a father who always had high expectations of her. Her father, a computer engineer who did not graduate from college because he was hired away before he finished, was emphatic about his daughter's educational plans. He always expected the best grades from her and a strong work ethic. However, Nina's determination to go to college transcends just parental expectation, it involves a high degree of personal confidence and self-efficacy:

> My dad would probably have had a heart attack if I'd said I didn't want to go. I can't even imagine not going, because I wanted to go just for myself, not even thinking about what my dad said. I couldn't even imagine not going to college. I don't know, from the time I was like in kindergarten, and I was in an advanced reading group, so, it was always expected of me. I didn't even think about not going. I didn't know what degree I was going to get, but I always knew I'd get one. It was just second nature, I guess.

In this reflective statement, Nina has integrated her goals, perceived skill level, and social expectations into her cognitive choice to attend college. Bandura (1986) describes this as "triadic reciprocality," the combined and reciprocal influences of behavior, environmental influence and personal factors that affect cognition. Nina's sense of knowing she would always attend college is the result of those reciprocal influences.

In choosing a major, Nina, like many of the other students in the study, went through a period of exploration, trial and error before finding the right field of study. Although her father was a bit prescriptive in his expectations for her, Nina laughed when she reflected on her major choices:

> Well, they're pretty happy now that I'm in business, but my dad had a whole plan for me. I'd get my undergraduate degree in Finance at Michigan State University. Then I'd go to U. of M., my dad loves U.of M., to get my Masters in Economics, and then I can move to Washington D.C. and join the Cabinet, or something. He just had a whole plan for me, and finance isn't something I wanted to do. I really started off in Dietetics, then I moved to Physiology, because I wanted to be, a P.A., a Physicians Assistant. Then I took a finance class, because I really wasn't into science, and I switched to Finance. My dad was really happy about that! But I realized that Finance wasn't for me either, then I got into Human Resource Management, and I love it! He's proud of me, though. He's happy with me getting a Business degree, you know? He knows I'm doing what I'd like to do now. I actually found my niche, so he's very happy. Very proud.

Sara's experiences are similar to Nina's in finding the career choice, although Sara's father was a little harder to win over. A senior majoring in hospitality business, Sara is the oldest of three children. Sara's grandparents on both sides came from the borderlands in the Rio Grande Valley before moving to Michigan in search of factory jobs with their children. Her parents, both of Mexican heritage, were born and raised in Texas. Sara's father earned a bachelor's degree from a public Michigan college. He retired when she was in her early teens, having worked for many years in the medical field. Sara's mother, having only a 5th grade education, made a home for the family. Sara's parents were determined that she and her siblings go to college.

> There was no question I had to go to college. I didn't have a choice. Not that I didn't want to, because they raised me that way. My parents used a lot of examples, they would show me one of my cousins and pull me aside and say, and "You see them They dropped out when they were 17 from high school and now look at him. Now he is working hard, look at his hands. They are all rough and calloused and he is having a hard time. You just don't get anywhere unless you graduate from high school and you go to college." You know, they put that in your mind when you are four years old, it starts to burn an impression on your brain. Like there is

> nothing, there is no other way. Whenever we'd see a bum on the street, dad would say, "That's what happens when you don't go to college." So you tell an eight year old or something like that, it really gives you this harsh impression...But I'm glad that they did it, because I'm going to graduate soon and I'm the first one to graduate, out of all of my cousins.

In high school and as a college freshman, there was nothing Sara wanted more than to study drama and go into the theatre. Her parents, however, had other plans. She explains "there was no way in hell they were going to let me do theater. Like 'I'm paying for your college tuition, you are going to go into computers or engineering or business, something real,' is what they said." Sara began her search then for "something real" to study in college to respect her parents wishes, but the search led her to find something that she could be happy with. She started as an economic and political science major and made the dean's list for her first two semesters, but she felt the major was "not really real. It is all theory." Sara said she tried to compromise.

> I just hated it. I just didn't like it there and I didn't know what I wanted to do. I kept telling dad, "I want theater, I want to go to theater." And I think that's probably why I hated it so much. I didn't know what to do. And dad said, "Well you know, you better do something and you better do it quick, because I'm not going to keep paying for tuition for you to do something and then you want to change your mind halfway through."

Sara decided it was time for some help. She went to the career services office and took a "personality test." Although she thought the test was "cheesy" at the time, Sara was able to identify some majors of interest and set about talking with various advisers about their academic programs, taking an introductory course or two in different majors she found interesting. When she did find a major that fit, her father was quite dismayed at her choice.

> I found hospitality-business school and I really liked it. I brought the information to my dad and he was like, "People do not go to school to learn how to be a hotel manager." I'm like "Dad, yes you do, you got to do this." And he was just set against it. And the first year he thought I was wasting my time. He goes, "I can teach you how to check in a place and how to start a restaurant." I'm like "Dad!", and he goes "Your Aunt started a restaurant. She's been doing fine and

> she didn't even graduate from high school." He goes "How hard can it be that you need a college degree?" Too bad her restaurant is out of business now. But, now he's more comfortable about it. He's excited about it. I think his biggest thing was that I was doing something that he didn't understand the lingo. Like I when I talk to him, I'm talking to him about different hotel companies and the mergers that are happening between one company and another. Or we talk about like what the ROI is, the return investment on someone's restaurant, you know, whether or not you should go into a franchise or do independent things like that. It is all over his head. It is new for him, so he feels like, I think the tension before was, he was scared that I was going to learn something that he didn't know and then we wouldn't be able to communicate on the same level. When I was a kid, he wanted me to study medicine like he did. Or go into law like he had always dreamed of doing. I think that was a big thing too. Like he still says, "Well I'm going to go to law school, some day I'm going to go just to go and get my degree." And that's why I think he always wanted me to do those things to kind of finish what he didn't get to do. But, I guess, I couldn't do that. I know a lot of kids end up doing those things, they do what their parents always wanted to do. But, I knew I was just not going to be happy.

Like Nina, Sara found her niche in finding a major that she really loved. Although respectful of her father's hopes for her, Sara's enthusiasm for her major led her to excel in it. There is an animation in her eyes when she talks about her internship experiences or her work as a student leader in several hospitality related student organizations. One could argue that there is always a bit of theater in the hospitality business, so perhaps Sara did find the perfect compromise to her father's concerns.

Seeing a child take an interest outside one's realm of experience can be threatening for some parents, especially those with little to no education. As you may recall, neither of Eliana's parents had any formal schooling nor could they read. They had distinctly different expectations for their nine children who traveled with them on migrant farm routes. Eliana talks about her parents' expectations:

> My dad, his expectation was just for us to work hard and to help them out. He never expected us to go to school. He never liked us going to school 'cuz he wanted us to help him. My mother, she would, I guess her expectations for us, she wanted us to have an education and to try to get better jobs so that we could help the

> family. So there was always like arguments between my parents because one expected something different from us than the other.

Eliana admits that her mother really didn't have much of an idea about what school was, but she wanted her to go. "She wasn't really educated of how far you're supposed to go to school. So she just wanted us to get some education, to learn something more that she couldn't, to get around, " she said. Eliana drew some support from her family, although they really do not understand her experience. Her mother and sisters were "just happy that I'm going to college, I guess, because I'm the first one to attend college."

Taking first steps is a time of excitement and joy for parents, but it is tempered by the fact that once the child begins to take those steps, the parent may not be able to control where the student chooses to walk. As children master taking steps their independence and confidence grow. Such is the case of students in this study as they find the right path for themselves in college and career. But just as the students move toward their future, they also may be moving away from communities and relationships that have been a formative part of their identity.

Changing relationships with friends from home

Although many students who attend college see their relationships change with friends from back home, the changes experienced by students in the study take on a significant cultural dimension that impacts their sense of identity. As students enter college they are exposed to a different expressions of Mexican American and other Latino/a cultures often quite different from their cultural experiences in their home communities. The adjustment to academic, social and racial culture of campus also stimulates change in college students as each struggles to find their place within the campus environment and develop a sense of belonging. In realizing opportunities that the college experience

provides, friendships change and new perspectives develop both culturally and professionally.

Although Andres tried to maintain his relationships with friends from back home, things changed as he finished his first year in college. As Andres ventured from home to college, his world became larger and his identity as a street kid from Detroit changed.

> After living up here for a couple of months and going home on the weekends or whatever, I lost touch with a lot of them. I became a traitor and I think I'm better than everybody else at home because I go to college -- that's a lot of the attitude that I get from home and it wasn't me. I don't think it was me portraying this attitude. I'm sure that after coming up here I got a reality check like the whole world isn't a big ghetto, you know? There's nice things. There's nice streets. There's nice cars. There's nice people. There are people who aren't out to give you dirty looks or rob you or something like that. That's not the mentality up here...at school I feel completely safe.

Andres's mother has been an instrumental support in his changing circle of friends. She welcomes Andres's friends into her home and thinks nothing of having a houseful of his college friends crashing at her house for the weekend and feeding them home-cooked meals. Her support has helped Andres make a successful transition to college, although she misses her son. He said, "She loves everything that I do up here. She just really thinks it's made me a better person."

Jamie said his friendships with friends from high school haven't changed much as he lives so close to home, but he also admits "I see things differently probably now." Jamie hangs out with more minorities in college, with most of his friends coming from MBS or NAHBS. In being able to connect with more students who share his cultural background, Jamie reflects on the changes he sees in himself and his perspective:

> Growing up, I went to private school, pretty much white and [my home town is] pretty much white. I kinda see through things, I don't know through white eyes but the white way of looking at things sometimes and now that I'm with more minorities, black and

> Mexican and other people, it changes a little bit the way you see things. I don't know if it's good or bad or not but it's different.

Like Jamie, Luisa also grew up in a predominantly white environment, but her relationship with her mostly white friends back home is quite different. She and Celia, another girl from high school who came to Michigan State, are still close. However, many of their other friends who didn't go to college are still living at home with parents and not doing much of anything to build a career. Luisa has cut ties with them because "they think that people like me and Celia are sell-outs, or show-offs or whatever when we talk about what we're doing at school, so I don't really associate with them. I don't feel like I have anything in common with them anymore."

Other students in the study talked about being called a 'sellout.' Sara's family was always active in the Mexican American social community, active in church, quinciñeras and social celebrations that seemed to happen every weekend. Yet Sara found herself becoming alienated from other Latinos in high school when her academics set her apart. Always a high achieving student, she was puzzled by the reactions of her Latino peers.

> For some reason the Latino high school kids did not identify with me. They would tell me that I was trying to act like I was white. And so I think it was a lot because I was very smart in school and because I would get the good grades and they didn't. I would get recognition from administrative people within the school, and they would see. I mean I was even called a 'sellout,' which I mean how can you be 15 years old and be a sellout? Whatever, you know. I didn't understand that, so I ignored that.

Things changed for Sara when she came to campus. Her close friends are all from Latino backgrounds. Yet, Sara was quick to talk about other groups of friends outside her ethnic circle: "I do, you know, have friends that are outside of those kinds of circles....I like to jump from one circle to the other and one day I might feel like hanging around with these people or other people. So I do like jump around, but I feel most comfortable with my Latin friends."

As students in the study moved away from their friends at home and gained greater independence from their families by going to college, they found new environments and developed new perspectives on their cultural identity. In order to understand some of the issues the students in the study deal with as cultural and career identities intersect in college, we must first explore their perspectives on their cultural heritage.

Changing Values and Cultural Identity

Mexican American. Hispanic. Chicano. Latino. The variety of labels used to describe Mexican American students is as diverse as the students' conceptions of their ethnic identity. Carlos has given a lot of thought to issues surrounding Mexican-American identity. On campus, he has always been active in the Latino community by being a mentor to high school students and participating in leadership conferences. He says that "just the terminology Mexican-American means that you have Mexican culture, but that you were born in America, so you're basically considered to be a Mexican-American." But, for Carlos, cultural values change as generations change. "Nowadays, the values and the cultures of Mexican-Americans are changing due to the fact that you've got second and third generation families adapting to American culture," he says. As a first generation Mexican American, Carlos acknowledged that he may see Mexican culture differently than those who are second or third generation.

> To me, it's more of a culture, rather than skin color. I think being a Mexican is more or less a culture. What I mean by that is that we really value family values, norms, religions, basically we're almost the same anywhere in the world, whether we're Mexican-American, or just a Mexican. They're almost the same values.

Carlos noted there are a lot of different conceptions about being Mexican, Hispanic or Latino, although they don't mean much to him:

> To me they're just terms to label people... probably a lot of us use Latino, rather than Hispanic, only because Hispanic came from so-called government, made up. That's what the government named our group, but to me, I guess it really doesn't identify me. But that's

> just more of just a name or just to gather people that almost fit the same criteria even though they have different cultures...Mexicans are totally different than Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans are totally different than Cubanos. But just more or less, the alignment of being brown skinned and speaking Spanish kind of integrates them as a whole, as being Latino, and that's where you get all this terminology. Latin American, I guess, that's how they put us together, but other than that, the cultures are totally different.

Carlos talks candidly about issues of skin color, noting that in Mexico, people with lighter skin and eyes are often wealthier and more privileged than those who have darker skin. But in the U.S., he says, "We've been labeled as being a brown person, so we kind of end up with that identity anywhere." College can transform one's ideas about skin color in Carlos' view.

> I don't think it matters. I think it really depends on the person and where they grew up and their perspective. And I think it also depends on the amount of time they've been here at college because being a freshman you have a different perspective because you were raised different. Once you get into college, you kind of adapt to the college environment, and you tend to not see skin as a factor. You more or less see the person as a whole... I don't see only because you're lighter, you're treated differently in the Latino community or if you're darker, you're treated differently. I just don't see that.

Tom's experience as a light-skinned Mexican has been slightly different. He and his brother grew up on the west side of Detroit, and both attended Catholic schools through high school. Their parents divorced when Tom was still a toddler, and he had very little time with his Mexican father. However, he and his brother spent lots of time with grandparents and playing with cousins on both sides of the family. Tom identifies with both his Mexican and Polish heritage, and has struggled with others' perceptions of him: "A lot of times it's hard because I look white, so no one really takes me for a Mexican-American, and when I tell them, it's kind of awkward." After attending a predominantly white high school, Tom's first opportunity to be a part of a cultural community of his peers came in college. It was hard for him to adjust at first to participating in cultural activities on campus.

> It's kind of hard for me because at times I don't, sometimes I don't feel accepted because I do look white. A lot of people, they're like, I get the feeling, "Why are you here?" I mean, "You're not Mexican." But I am. And you know, a lot of people don't' know that. And I'm not saying that a lot of people were like that toward me, but it's the feeling that I got.

Tom acknowledges it's still hard for him to adjust sometimes in the Latino community because he feels the unspoken question "Why is he here?" Yet he perseveres because he knows "once you get in there it's better. You know, you make more friends and people know who you are and stuff."

Rocio identifies as both Chicano and Mexican-American because "I can identify as both. In my own mind I can justify existing within both of those subcultures. You know what I'm saying? It's cool." He reflects on his Mexican American heritage:

> Mexican-Americans, like my grandparents that live in Texas, they don't even speak English, and they're all about Mexico and stuff 'cuz all their family was there when it used to be Mexico and stuff or just like a little bit north. They migrated from there and then that makes them Mexican as hell, right? And then like the other side, they used to have 'em, that were just in Texas and like before that they were just scattered with no kind of history or real place or anything. And then my parents, they're all born in America. So that would make me Mexican-American, right?

Rocio describes his Chicano identity differently. To him, "Chicano is like a more political term that I would like to identify with just like, be known in like political arena 'cuz that's another thing that I would like to be interested in later in life." Rocio was exposed to the Chicano movement through his parents at a young age and remembers being involved in his parents' activities with a Chicano organization. His parents made sure Rocio was engaged in his Chicano heritage, mixed folklore dancing with politics, although he admits,

> "I don't know too much about the whole entire movement except for what I've seen on like PBS' specials and stuff. My father made me watch the stuff. The stuff was like Corky Gonzáles and all those other *movimientos*, or whatever the hell they're called."

In college, Rocio has been active in Chicano and Latino activities. He's observed that a number of other students aren't aware of what Chicano means. "A lot of them haven't even experienced it [being Chicano], " Rocio explains, "They deal with it in an ignorant fashion....people are ignorant for not knowin' about what kind of background we have."

Like Rocio, Carlos would argue that some people identify as Mexican American or Chicano without any real understanding of the culture, history or language. He suggests that it may be because "the parents are second or third generation, they didn't teach them the values, or they lost the values of where they actually came from." Carlos says that is why many Latinos have lost their Spanish language as well. He suggested that some people turn to adopting a label to help them feel more culturally connected:

> For instance, people are labeling themselves as *mestistas* when in reality they don't even understand the culture of being a Chicano or being a Mexican, especially people who are raised in the Midwest. I see that a lot, so you take people from the southwest that come up here to go to college, they kind of get mad because they're labeling themselves whatever they are, and in reality, they don't understand the culture for themselves. They just label themselves that way. Especially from the Midwest, because there's a very low concentration of Latinos--especially in Michigan.

Other than Rocio, none of the other students in the study cared to identify as Chicano. Most felt that a label was just a label. Language was more an issue of being connected to one's cultural heritage.

All of the students in the study regarded Spanish as a very important part of their cultural heritage, although all but three students were raised with English as their native language. Not being taught Spanish in the home had some important implications for students' feelings about themselves, their families and their cultural identity.

Although her parents are native Spanish speakers, Angela and her sisters were raised with English primarily spoken in their home. Her parents spoke in

Spanish when they visited their parents and when they did not want Angela and her sisters knowing what they were getting for Christmas or other "little things that they didn't want us to know about." Angela's recalled her mother's experience in going to school when she was a child.

> When she was going into school and all she knew was Spanish, she said when she went in she got teased a lot because she would say things like in Spanish and all the kids would tease her because she didn't know English. So for her growing up, it was always pressed on her, "you need to learn English. You need to learn the new English." So growing up, she says that's what she pushed on us was English....Spanish just became the second language.

This experience is characteristic of many other students' Spanish speaking parents in the study. The social pressure to learn English seems to have deeply influenced their decisions as parents to make sure their children knew English before Spanish. Angela can usually understand what she is hearing in Spanish now and said that sometimes she'll try to answer back in Spanish, "but it just takes me a little bit longer to remember what to say or what is the proper way of saying it." When asked about how important she thinks it is for a person to be bilingual in the Mexican-American community, Angela said:

> I think it is important. Although the main reason why I think it is important is because my parents speak it and their siblings speak it, which is all the older generation. If we don't know the language and we don't know the culture and things that go on being a Mexican-American, then it is just going to fade out. And we are just going to be not really knowing what we are or who we are or where we came from. I think that is very important. My parents see that now too, but at the time it was just like they wanted me fit in -- they wanted me to know English. They didn't want me to speak with a Spanish accent or something like that. So that's why they pushed the English, I think.

Angela feels strongly about Spanish being part of her heritage and intends to make sure her children know the language.

For five students in the study, not being able to communicate fully with Spanish speaking family members left them feeling somewhat disconnected from their family. In junior high, Richard decided he was going to learn Spanish: "I

wanted to take it just because my grandparents, that was their major speaking language, and I didn't know what they were saying." The youngest of four children, Richard is the first of his family to attend a major university. His father dropped out of high school to join the military and then worked in automotive factories. Richard's mother has been working as a domestic since before she graduated from high school. Both parents speak Spanish primarily in the home, but they taught their children only English. Richard explained, "My Ma, she didn't want to teach me Spanish, just because she said it was going to be difficult for me to know Spanish and then come back and learn English." After picking up "the basics" in his junior high Spanish classes, Richard made an effort to pick up more Spanish from his parents. Although Spanish is important to him, he feels uncomfortable and embarrassed about how he speaks. He said, "I can't speak it. I don't feel comfortable speaking like what I know just because, when I speak, it sounds like it is broken. Like broken Spanish, like I don't know what exactly what I'm saying."

Olga's parents, both educators, had some definitive ideas about their children's language and cultural associations. She said her parents "thought that, you know, A) they didn't want you to grow up with an accent, and B) it was just a social stigma, when we were growing up -- its not cool -- to eat Mexican food, or speak Spanish in front of the white people, so it hurt." Of her parent's children, she was "the only one who made a concerted effort to learn Spanish."

> I studied in Mexico for a few months, and took Spanish in college. It's funny, at different times [depending on] my level of comfort, I still have an American accent. I really hate it. I realized in Mexico when I felt real uncomfortable around native speakers because my Spanish was no better than the white person next to me. But when I felt really comfortable, I could get by, and people would say, "Hey, what part of Mexico are you from?"

Olga's father, like many other students' parents in the study, wanted a better life for his daughter. Although he initially did not teach Olga Spanish, he supported

her wanting to learn it as part of her cultural heritage. However, "my dad didn't want me spending any time with Mexican Americans," Olga says, "He wanted us to be completely taken into the mainstream culture." An educated man coming from a migrant family, Olga's father's experiences in the Mexican American community in Texas were much different than those he found in Michigan. Olga explains:

> Their experience was different. Growing up in Texas, it's not like growing up here. Like, there's a bunch of Mexicans, and then there are tons more white people. [In Texas] it's not like that. It's just an accepted part of the culture. Even the white people eat Mexican food, and take part in some of the traditions, but within that culture, you still have your educated workforce, you know -- your doctors, your lawyers, and then all different segments that you would find in any other culture. But here, a lot of the Mexican-Americans tend to be the migrant workers from the wrong side of town, who have different lifestyles, whose fathers weren't in the home, or whatever. And that's not where my father, even though that's how his life had originated, that's definitely not how it ended up for him or for his brothers and sisters, so they wanted some things better for us, and I understand.

Although she understands her father's perspective, Olga is deeply engaged in learning about her Mexican heritage, not only through language but also by being deeply involved in the Mexican-American issues in college. It seems that students see learning Spanish as a way of becoming more connected to their Mexican heritage.

Like Olga, students who had limited or no ability to speak Spanish growing up, learning Spanish seems to have gained greater importance in college. In interacting within the Latino community on campus, most students believe that being bilingual in English and Spanish is not only an advantage, but also an asset to being accepted in some circles. Nina was very resistant to learning Spanish when she was young, but now feels that being able to speak and understand Spanish is "very important," she elaborates:

> I made the mistake of when I was little, not wanting to learn it. I didn't see any difference between me and the other kids, so I didn't see why I had to learn Spanish, and my dad always tried to teach

> me, but I was so stubborn. I would just run away, plug up my ears, and start screaming, "I don't want to learn that." I'd just run off. I didn't want to learn it at all, and now I regret it. Being in the community, you're definitely more accepted if you do speak the language. Within the Latino community, they definitely accept you a lot more if you speak the language.

When Raquel came to campus she had the opportunity to interact with a much larger Latino community and in doing so, reflect on her own ethnicity. Her lack of Spanish language skills caused her to initially withdraw from the campus Latino community. During her freshman year, Raquel went to a welcome reception and felt out of place.

> I just remember everybody spoke Spanish, and it just seemed like I was the only one that didn't speak Spanish... It was like I never felt so light before in my life. In [my home town] I could go brag about being, you know, Mexican, with my friends and be like, "yeah, well, at least I have culture and like all this stuff." But then I went to this reception-dance thing and I like I don't know how to do the salsa or merengue or anything, I can't speak Spanish, I can't even roll my Rs, so it's ridiculous sounding when I try to speak. I felt so out of it.

Raquel's initial reluctance to get involved with Latino activities and organizations came from her feeling that "there's some people that if they knew I didn't speak Spanish they would look down upon me like, like being a Mexican that doesn't speak Spanish." For her first few years at college, Raquel felt her co-ethnic peers wouldn't accept her, so she isolated herself from the Latino community. However, as she met more Latinos, especially in her business major, she realized that its "not a big deal at all." Finding the balance in what it is to be Mexican-American can be a challenge. Raquel explains:

> So it's kind of like double-edged like you have to really relate to your culture but at the same time we didn't —I didn't grow up in Mexico. I'm an American at the same time and like living in America. I experienced the American way of living so it's like it's easier for me to relate as an American than it is for me as a Mexican.

Raquel wants to be able to speak Spanish fluently and sees it as a life goal. However, like so many of the other students in the study, Raquel identifies the

most significant obstacle: "it's just like a matter of finding the time now ... it's kind of taken a back burner to getting other goals accomplished."

Just as learning Spanish helps American born students stay connected to their culture, learning English has a profound affect on first generation students. The Mexican economy was bad and times were hard when Alma was born in Mexico City. Her father, a skilled-tradesman with one year of college, moved the family to Chicago in hopes of a better job when she was just a toddler. The family stayed with relatives just outside the Projects. Alma remembers how her brother helped the family learn English when he started school.

> I didn't start learning English until my brother was in kindergarten. Because he would come home and say, "Mommy, mommy," in Spanish he would say it, "I learned a new word in English." And so my brother would teach my mom, teach all of us. My dad was a little more, more fluent in his English because he had taken some classes in college. And he had also been reading some books and what have you, so my dad was a little bit more farther along than my mom. And when my brother started learning that, I was learning that with him. You know, he would come home, show me the pictures and he would say "apple," you know, "say apple" and so I would go and tell my mom, "Mom, apple, apple," you know? So I started learning when my brother started learning, at the same time.

Both Alma and her brother helped their mother learn English, and later their younger sister when she was born. The whole family is now fluent in English and Alma says that at home "sometimes we just kind of speak English and that's it. But, we keep trying to force the Spanish because that's pretty much the only time we practice it. You know, and it is such an important part of our culture that we try to practice it still at home." It took Alma awhile to realize how important being bilingual was to her.

> At first when I was little my mom would always say, "come on you are my interpreter, I need you, I need you to help me." because she really couldn't get along too well. And I would always be just bothered, "I don't want to do it. You ask. You know this and this and that and whatever." I was always kind of shy and things like that. But now the way I look at it, I get a thrill out of it, I enjoy, I totally use it as much as possible. I think it kind of gives me an upper hand on a lot of things. Not so much just the business world,

> but even for myself. I feel better that I can communicate in more than just one way--that I could help other people out, because I know there is a lot of Latino people that don't speak the language very well. So sometimes it comes in handy when I'm at a store and they are trying to communicate with the vendor and they can't. So, just kind of help them out. I feel good about myself, being able to do that.

Alma's mastery of English, not only helped her family, but also bolstered her confidence and self-esteem. She later mastered French and considered, for a time, becoming an interpreter for the United Nations. Both Alma and her father see Spanish as essential to having a Mexican identity:

> How can you call yourself a Mexican or a Latino if you don't know your language? I think that it is really hard to kind of judge everyone the same way. Because sometimes it is not their fault, it is the parents' fault. At the same time, I'm and I've grown more into it too. I'm very, very into trying to find out where I come from and all of my tradition and my roots and things of that nature. And I know that we don't all see everything the same. But for me, it is very, very important for a person to know their motherland language. Their home traditions or where they come from. I would expect that, well not expect that, but I would hope that everyone take the interest of doing that. Even when someone that might be half German and half French, I would hope that they take the interest to, if not be fluent in their language, at least learn somewhat about it, you know? Take a couple of classes if you don't already know it and take interest in doing it.

Alma recalls dating a Mexican boy who didn't speak Spanish. "My father had a big problem with that, " she said, "just for the simple fact that in our eyes, it is a very, very important part of the culture."

Bi-cultural and multi-cultural identity

As Carlos observed earlier, second and third generation Mexican-Americans adapt progressively to American culture. Marriage and family lines begin to blend across ethnic and cultural lines. How does coming from a bi-cultural or multicultural family affect students' cultural identity? To Luisa, being bi-cultural is "just being proud of your culture and embracing it and learning about it." Luisa's relationship with her mother is very close. Her father, of French and English decent, divorced her mother when Luisa was a young child. Luisa's

mother, separated from her Mexican heritage by adoption, has searched for her Mexican heritage. Luisa talks about her ancestry and cultural identity:

> All she [Luisa's mother] knows about her birth mother is that her name was [Adela]. She was a migrant worker with a fifth grade education, and she was sixteen years old, and that's about all she knows. She doesn't know who her father was, or what race he was. My mom was adopted by Caucasian people, so she doesn't speak Spanish as a native language or whatever, and she doesn't know anything about her medical history or her ethnic background, either, so I consider myself either half Caucasian and half Mexican, or maybe a little less, like three quarters white, one quarter Hispanic, but I like to think I'm half and half.

Luisa's mother worked hard to learn about her culture on her own and teach it to her daughter. Through travel, reading, cooking and history, Luisa and her mother have explored their heritage and identity as Mexican Americans. Although Luisa says being bi-cultural "doesn't make a whole lot of difference," she has sometimes encountered challenges in being accepted in Latino communities.

> I see it as a problem in the Mexican, or Hispanic, or Latino, or Chicano communities, because they tend not to accept you if you don't speak Spanish, or you're not round faced, or you're not a migrant worker, or you're not from Texas or California, and a lot of times I get people who say, "Oh, really? You're Mexican? I never would have guessed." And they argue with me about it, and I say, "Really, I'm Mexican." And it's hard, because some people don't believe me, or they think I'm trying to squander on the one quarter or half Hispanic blood, and take a bunch of opportunities, take advantage of things by using that. I like the culture. I'm proud of the culture, and the heritage, and everything, so I am grateful for it.

Christian grew up in a suburb north of Detroit. His paternal grandfather and grandmother worked for an affluent family as domestics after traveling north from Mexico in search of work. Christian's father was born in Michigan earned a bachelor's degree in business from a local business college. As a mix of Irish, Polish, German and Mexican ancestry, Christian admits he sees himself "a little different than most people, you know, most Mexican Americans, because of my diverse background…I feel like I'm made up of a lot of cultures, but the one that I relate to mostly is my Mexican American heritage." He never really knew his maternal grandparents, and grew up immersed in the traditions of his Mexican

grandparents and relatives. Still, Christian says having bi-cultural heritage leaves you open to questions. He explains:

> A lot of people are like, "Well, why do you consider yourself Mexican? How come you don't consider yourself Polish, or something?" ... I kind of see myself identifying myself with my family and their ancestors, because I'm made up of so many things, but I've been exposed to just one, really one side in the cultures, and the things that go along with being a Mexican.

Jamie, a sophomore exploring various majors in business, has a rich family life with close relationships to his Mexican grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. He is the second-generation removed from migrant work on his Mexican father's side. His grandfather and other family members remain politically active in issues affecting migrant farming communities. His mother is of mixed European heritage. Jamie recalls the looks he and his parents would get from time to time "because my dad's so dark and my mom has blonde hair and blue eyes and the complete opposite." Like other the other business students from bi-cultural backgrounds, Jamie noted that acceptance can be hard to come by from some people of either Mexican or Caucasian descent. Acceptance, he said is:

> pretty much the same either way. I mean, I've heard things from Mexican kids, even on campus, you know, that if you're not 100 percent Mexican, you're not in the clique or, and white people, too, but it's the same thing. It's, it's not just, you know, white people. They're made out to look bad. It's everybody.

When he thinks of his own identity, Jamie says , "I just think of myself as American before I think of myself as Mexican. I'm an American with Mexican descent and I, I try not to look at people like, like that, their ethnicity and things like that. I don't think it's that important really."

Raquel expressed a similar feeling. Her father is of Mexican heritage and her mother is Caucasian. She grew up in small, predominantly white town and didn't begin to realize she was any different than any of her classmates until she entered middle school. Raquel said it was an interesting "revelation" for her when

she realized her Mexican heritage set her apart. "I felt special then, like I had this something, this background that I could actually say look at my history," she said, "Look at the culture that I have and it's different than the European culture that you guys identify with."

> I remember this day I realized I was slightly different. It was when I had a cousin staying with us, like a weekend or something, and she got there on a Friday afternoon and I came home and her and my mom were talking, and I walked in the middle of their conversation, and the first thing they asked me was when I entered in was "What do you consider yourself to be?" And I had no idea what they were talking about. I think I might have been in seventh or eighth grade, and I was like "what do you mean?" And they said, "When someone asks you 'what are you,' what do you say?" And I'm like "American?" and they just thought that was hilarious. You know why? They were talking about how I have another cousin that's half Mexican, half Caucasian, and she referred to herself as being white. She didn't consider herself being more Mexican, she considered herself Caucasian. And, there was this thing about Mexican 'cause my cousin that I was with that afternoon talking to my Mom, she's, she has the same situation too, and she considers herself Mexican. And I never really thought about that. I was like, well, what's the difference? You know, like why should you have to consider yourself either Caucasian or Mexican? We're Americans.

Sometimes it's difficult to have to divide yourself between multiple cultural heritages. Yet with each institutional or employment form that requires it, Raquel, like other bi-cultural students have to decide what box to check:

> When I check off that box on the application forms or whatever, I always put Mexican. I guess it's because of the different races and cultures that I have, Mexican is the strongest, like I'm half Mexican but I'm only like one-eighth German or whatever, so it's like Mexican stands out more than the other ones.

Carmen grew up in a multicultural urban city. After her parents separated, her mother of northern European descent raised Carmen. Carmen's father was the first generation of his family to be born in the U.S. after his Mexican parents moved to Texas for farm work. Her father came to Michigan to work in automotive factories. Like Raquel, Carmen did not really pay much attention to racial or ethnic differences, although things changed as she got older. In high school, she began to notice that there were different racial cliques "Mixed

students had a lot of problems with it," she said, "it was like 'well you don't hang out with us, so you are not black or you don't hang out with us, 'cause you are not Mexican enough' or just stuff like that." Carmen found herself hanging with other bi-cultural students. In college, Carmen found herself associating mostly with Latinos, although she admits:

> I don't know how it happened that way 'cause I'm very light complexioned as you can see and a lot of people put me in the category of white or Caucasian. I don't really look out to say, oh I'm just going to hang out with Latinos or I'm just going to hang out with blacks. I don't, I don't look at it like that. It just happens, it just happens to be the person who I get along with. I don't really say well they share my culture or what not, so I'm just going to be with them.

Carmen is very active in a variety of Mexican American professional, cultural and social organizations in college, holding a variety of leadership positions. Although all of the bi-cultural students expressed some feelings about not being fully accepted in either Mexican American or other cultural groups, all of them seem to have sought to explore more about Mexican ancestry in college. The students' participation in Latino peer groups and student organizations seems to build a sense of cultural confidence or efficacy in the bi-cultural student, as they explore their growing sense of cultural identity in a world that often tries to force singular cultural choices.

Having explored some of the cultural and family contexts students bring to the college experience, we turn now to looking at the significance of personal and social factors that shape students' conceptions of a business identity and how their college experiences facilitate the intersections of career and cultural identity.

Cultural Connections in College & Social Learning

The college experience is a powerful catalyst to manifesting intersections of cultural and career identity. Intersections of career and cultural identity also suggest a bi-cultural identity for the students in the study as they seek to balance

their cultural selves with their emerging identity as a business major. The challenges inherent in striking such a balance come from a variety of factors. First, there are no Mexican American faculty members in the college of business to serve as role models. Most Latino/a faculty at Michigan State University are clustered in the social sciences or liberal arts. Second, there are markedly few Mexican American students (.5%) enrolled in business majors. Third, and perhaps as a result of the first two, the cultural landscape is one that favors Latino/as in helping professions, particularly those that address cultural issues. A variety of social learning processes facilitated the students' evolving cultural and career identities through their college experience.

Social learning emerged as a salient element in students' identity process on many levels. Congruent with Bandura's self-efficacy theory, self-confidence emerges as students make comparisons between themselves and their peers and others (vicarious experience), as well as their own mastery of experiences related to their personal, academic and career development. For all of the students in the study, peer associations were a significant influence in fostering links between professional and cultural worlds. Relationships with co-ethnics both in business degree programs and those in other fields of study were especially interesting as students' cultural and career identities intersect in their college experiences.

Mastering Transitions

The transition from high school to college is a challenging one, especially so for first-generation college students. The process of orienting to a new environment can be a source of personal mastery in and of itself. The thought of college made Richard nervous the closer the time it came for him to go. When he was selected for a weeklong competitive summer business program Richard looked for a way out. He thought he had it when his cousins were coming for a

visit from out of state, but Richard's mother wouldn't hear of him staying home. His comfort level immediately changed when he was assigned to a project team with a Mexican American peer counselor. "I saw him up there like, you know, the only Mexican or whatever and it was like, I want to be on his team. I want to be on his team." Richard said, "I got to meet him and then he showed me what I needed to do, like starting steps or whatever, what I needed to do to be successful." Having a role model he could relate to helped Richard to connect socially and prepare himself for the challenges his first year was to bring.

Eliana participated in a weeklong minority orientation program just in the summer before she started college. It helped her to feel more comfortable as she was able to some students that she was able to hang out with in her first few weeks at school. Despite the early orientation, Eliana's first week was difficult, "I was lost. I had my map, looking everywhere. I was scared. What if I miss a class? What are they gonna do?" For social support, Eliana started going CRU meetings, supper clubs and "all the dances and stuff they threw for the Latino welcome receptions." The friends she made through attending Latino events took care of her during her first couple of years. Later, they encouraged her to join a multicultural sorority with them, rather than a Latina one. Eliana explains, 'the reason I guess I chose it is because it was multicultural. I don't like just hanging around with just Mexicans... I just decided that would just be better for me to get to know other backgrounds better 'cuz it would be better for my degree and out there when I go out to work."

Alma looked at college as an opportunity for a personal makeover. Struggling with memories of alienation in middle and high school after her family moved to Michigan, Alma talks about her goals for college:

> My first year I came in saying to myself, 'It is going to be different and this is my opportunity to change my whole image, my whole appearance, my whole—what's the word--my whole reputation, everything around, totally different. You know, and I'm going to

> know a lot of people and I'm going to meet everyone, I'm going to say hi to everybody and I'm going to go to all of these meetings and learn about everything.'

True to her word, Alma got involved, in fact, she said the greatest challenge for her in college has been not getting too involved. Her socialization with peers led her to choose business as a major. About a month into her freshman year, Alma met some Latino students who told her about NAHBS. She thought it was "cool" that they had meetings and that companies actually came out to talk with them. When Alma met Miguel, one of the group's officers, and some others she found something she wanted to be a part of:

> And he [Miguel] said, 'Why aren't you in business? That's where it's at, that's where the money is at. And look at us, we are having so much fun, we all met there.' And that I was jealous, you know. I wanted to hang around with them too and you know, go out and have fun. I thought maybe I should just go into business. So I thought I would go into hospitality. So then I decided, okay ... business is everywhere nowadays anywhere you want to go, anything you want to do. You have to know something about business.

Alma switched her major to hospitality business and got involved with NAHBS. Although the major was fun, she began to look at how her major choice would fit with other goals in her life. Her decision to change majors from Hospitality Business to Human Resources was partially influenced by the time she knew a career in hospitality would take from her family life. The reaction of one of her supervisors to her major had an even greater effect.

> One of my managers asked me what I was majoring in. I'm sorry I told him hospitality-business. He said, 'What? You are joking, right?' And I said, 'No.' And I was, at first I was kind of hurt that he said that to me. But then afterwards he said, 'Alma, you are going to college to a Big Ten, Michigan State University school and you are studying to be what I'm right now.' And he said, 'you know, that's really cool. You are going to have your degree and everything, but I've been here since I was 18 and now I'm a manager. I worked my way up or what have you. I'm going to school because I want to go to school, but to get a job like this, you don't really have to go to school and things like that.' 'You know,' he said, 'you are better than that. You are so much better than that. And, look at me, I'm always here 12 hours a day, I don't get to spend that much time with my family and I know that that's not

> what you want.' And he pretty much opened my eyes up to a lot of that. Even though it is a fun industry to work in, it is a lot of hard work. Not that I'm scared of hard work, but there are also other priorities in my life that I'm not willing to give up.

Balancing multiple life goals with career choice is a significant developmental task for each individual. The confidence that Alma gained through NAHBS and in choosing an initial major in which she had some experience created a comfortable foundation that later allowed her to incorporate and assess life goals she hadn't thought of initially when choosing her major. Now a Human Resources major, Alma feels she's found a better career fit. Human Resources was the "the best way to go and still be able to work with people," she said.

For Luisa, college gave her the opportunity to further explore her heritage and to be part of the Latino cultural community. She was a sophomore when she started noticing the diversity around her and "thinking that was something I wanted to be part of." Luisa joined NAHBS, "then that threw me into CRU, and everything else associated with it. The different Latino parties, and fraternities and sororities, and things like that." By getting involved in Latino activities and groups on campus, Luisa found new awareness:

> It made me realize that I needed to be more educated about my culture, and my, like, heritage, and blood lines and stuff. It changed me just by making me more aware of the different struggles on campus, and different cultures, different things that people are struggling with, different viewpoints, and different voices.

Although Carlos was very secure in his own Mexican heritage and migrant experiences, he also immersed himself in Latino organizations. He said what drew him to CRU was the chance to interact with other Latinos, an opportunity he didn't have growing up in a predominately white rural town. Socially, Carlos said he felt comfortable. He had white friends from his hometown he'd hang out with socially. But the CRU community offered a chance to learn and expand his awareness of different Latino cultures:

> I just went there because it was something I wanted to do, something different. I wanted to see how other Latinos from different regions react, or have their perspectives on anything. So it was just more of a learning thing....to learn a little bit more about different cultures. You have Puerto Ricans, you had Columbians, you had Uruguayans, and so basically that was part of the reason. It's not because that's what made me fit in. No, because obviously where I grew up I didn't fit in if you could call skin or culture the standards, so that wasn't it.

All of the students in the study were open and eager to learn about other cultures and experiences as they talked about friends and peers in college. Generally, students believed, as Eliana expressed earlier, that their willingness to learn about different perspectives would be a valuable asset to them in the business world.

As with nearly any large public university, there are a broad spectrum of organizations and cultural activities for students to engage in at Michigan State. Students' involvement in co-curricular activities and peer groups tend to enhance their sense of belonging in the campus environment. The co-curricular involvements of the students in the study were very diverse, from involvement in fraternities and sororities to political activist groups to academic and professional organizations. As students make choices about the activities they wish to engage in, there are salient implications that impact cultural and career identity.

Relationships with co-ethnics in business

As the smallest cultural population enrolled in business, being part of a culturally relevant professional student organization was an important influence in the students' career and cultural identities. The absence of cultural role models on the business faculty and the relative absence of Latino/a cultural support within the minority program in the college, left co-ethnic peer associations as the only viable means of cultural support for the students in the study. All but three students in the study were active members of the Native American and Hispanic Business Association (NAHBS), although all students in

the study had attended a meeting or participated in a NAHBS event. "We're friends first, but we're organized and we take care of business," said a former officer of the organization.

NAHBS grew out of Latino and Native American outreach efforts by a minority support program housed in the college of business. At first, the group existed informally and without a real structure. However, in 1994, eleven students attended the National Hispanic Leadership Conference in Austin, Texas with an adviser. The impact of the conference on the students was "overwhelming." Christian explains, "It was the amount of people there, and it was just, dressing up in a suit and trying to be professional and having a resume. It was one of my first aspects into the business world and it felt great. I loved it. It was just great, and bonding with the people. I felt like the people, the people that we went down there with, the group members, we were stronger, and we built relationships upon that, business relationships." The national conference is run by the National Hispanic Business Association (NHBA), a student run organization founded by students at the University of Texas at Austin. When that first group of students came back to campus, they became the first chartered chapter of the organization in Michigan. The connection to NHBA helped give the group a structure and a business purpose to attend the leadership conference each year.

The national conference has an inspiring effect on all the students in the study who have been able to attend. Jamie talks about his first experience going to Austin and the impact of being part of a conference with 600 Latino business students from across the country. At NAHBS meetings he said, "There's 15 people and then you got down there and there was a huge convention center of people just like you and all working to do the same thing. You don't think that big sometimes. You see your little group and, you know, that's it. But there's so

many more people out there that are doing the same thing." Asked if the conference influenced his decision to major in business, Jamie is quick to respond. "It didn't affect my decision on business. It did affect my decision on how much harder I'm gonna work, that you know, there's not just 15 people, Mexicans, that companies are looking at for jobs, that there's a ton more and you really got to get above the average guy." The conference's impact on Alma helped her to realize new possibilities and gain confidence in herself and her college career.

> Never in my mind would I have thought, oh yeah, when I go to college I'm going to be traveling and I'm going to have the opportunity to go to Texas on a business conference. Nothing like that. I was just so taken back by the idea that, "Oh my gosh!" you know, "I'm only how old and I'm doing all these things? I can't believe the opportunity that I've had!" and I was just in glory. I was just having so much fun and I learned a lot.

Through the conference and career fairs, Alma's astonishment and confidence in herself grew. She has cultivated pretty good relationships with some of the corporate representatives that she "always sees" at conferences. She's astonished that they know her. "They'll go like 'Hi Alma, what's up?,' Alma gushes, "Never would I have thought that they would recognize me like that or remember my name."

The professional contacts students make at conferences and career fairs are significant, but in terms of the national conference, networking among peers is an important objective of all of the students who attend. Carlos explains that networking is building a future:

> You get to network with colleagues from different universities, from different regions that don't have the same challenges that you do. They have different challenges than you do... You really get to learn what's going on in different areas of the nation. This is something you have to learn how to do because you're not only going to be dealing with the mid-west perspective. You're going to be dealing with what's going on in the Southwest, East Coast, maybe, down in Montana. Who knows? You've really got to understand the people and why they make decisions based on why they make those decisions.

The connection to the national Hispanic business community is significant. There's no doubt that being part of the National Hispanic Business Association had a significant impact on the students in the study as a group and individually. Individual students found new possibilities for their future in business and gained vital perspectives on the national Hispanic community and the world outside campus. But, perhaps most importantly is the effect of being part of the organization has on the students' individual and collective self-efficacy. "You know, it makes you feel good. It really does," Carlos said, "Knowing that you're part of this great organization that's run by students that gets national recognition. It makes you proud of what you are and what you accomplish, and what you can accomplish down the road."

The exposure to nationals, created a stronger, more cohesive group on campus. By seeing the accomplishments of Latino business students across the nation, NAHBS' members were convinced they could do the same. A good example of this comes from Christian:

> Probably, the main thing that I got out of it... is that anything is possible. When we came together, and Luis and Miguel were talking about having our own conference. We were still kind of a small group, and we went down to Texas, and we saw this great thing that they were doing down there, and Luis gave the group the idea, "Why can't we do that?" And I was like, "Wow, I didn't even think about that. Why can't we?" And he's like, "Let's do it." And we did it. And that just proves that with great people, and great motivation, anything can be done, and I've lived my life by that, and that's really, that's one of the main things, that we pulled together, and we said, "We don't have money. Well, let's raise the money." And we did it. That just added to what I strongly believe in.

The group did sponsor the first Midwest Hispanic Business Student Leadership conference which drew college business students from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan. However, their primary objective has always been primarily focused on building a supportive, peer-driven Latino community in business. Alma describes it as a "family environment. You feel a lot closer to

people that are there. And these are people that you will always keep in touch with, you know, forever." For Julio, that sense of family was important in how NAHBS members pulled together to support each other socially, academically and professionally. "I formed a lot of study groups with them," he said, taking pride in the way he and his peers helped each other out. Alma concurred:

> So, it has helped me a lot to learn about what business is and what it is supposed to be and what it will be in the future...NAHBS has really put all of those things or most of those things into perspective. As well as giving me another support group for myself in being able to discuss some things that you might be embarrassed to or shy to talk about in a huge classroom in front of 500 people. Just like resume things or about how to dress for an interview or how to speak to someone or that you have to return a letter to them when they send you or that when you have an interview with them.

The group's responsibility to the Latino community extends beyond just their own membership. As a whole NAHBS has been committed to hosting groups of college bound migrant students from Texas, reaching out to Cubano refugees, preparing care packages for fellow Latino students and low-income families, as well as serving as mentors for Latino middle school students. Socially, members of the group often attend parties together and maintain contact with alumni from the organization who have graduated. Upperclassmen regularly share stories and updates on the successes of NAHBS alumni who have graduated. A former officer and well-known alum describes the most important role NAHBS has for its alumni and members is "reaching out to our brothers and sisters to help them achieve what we have achieved."

Through many of the interviews conducted for this study, students referred to the role modeling and mentorship they had gained from other NAHBS members. Eliana and Carlos are excellent examples of the community value for giving back and helping others. Eliana said she tries to connect with freshmen that are coming up from her high school. "Like this one young girl," Eliana

explained, "she was talking to me and telling me she was really scared, that she feels homesick. That she wants to go back home. She feels real lonely but that she thinks she's gonna be able to be alright. I just started talking to her and now we've been hanging around with her more and making her feel more welcome." Carlos takes a more professorial approach in helping freshmen and new students benefit from his experience:

> I would get involved in the community to help other Latinos come to college, just to give them my perspective. And as I grew through the years, that's something that I took the initiative to do, is when I see a Latino freshman, I took time to sit and talk to them for maybe a couple of hours and just lecture them, whether they want to hear it or not. I still do, but I still think I could do a lot better to go out and reach out to the high schools, especially Latino students. And that's still something I want to do, but being so active, being involved in college, and just getting students to do better in college as a freshman, making that transition is very difficult.

The community support that NAHBS members have created is an especially powerful one. Not only does it create a safe place for students to explore their cultural heritage and career identity, it provides them with a sense of collective efficacy in helping each other to reach their goals both in college and beyond. In the absence of available role models, the group created it own role models in each other, building on the success each other through vicarious experiences and other social learning processes. All of the students in the study expressed the desire to give something back, to make a difference in their families and communities and most equated that with personal achievement and financial independence.

Relationships with co-ethnics outside of business

Most of the students were introduced to the Chicano/Latino community on campus by attending a welcome reception/dance or from a visit from a minority aide who contacted them in the first few weeks of school. One of the focal points for the Latino campus community is the Culturas de las Raza Unidas (CRU), a student organization dedicated to increasing awareness of and programming for

social, cultural, academic and political issues impacting the Latino community. CRU serves as the informal umbrella organization for other groups such as Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano de Aztlan (MEXA), the Puerto Rican Student Association, Sociedad de Estudiantes Dominicanos, and Latino fraternities and sororities. What drew most students to CRU was the chance to connect socially with other Latinos and cope with issues of being at a predominantly white university.

One student's involvement in CRU and MEXA were stimulated by her experiences with racism from rural co-workers. "I think that really enraged me. I think that set the stage for the first couple of years at Michigan State," she said, "I was part of the extreme leftist, political activist group called MEXA and I was very militant." After awhile, she became disillusioned with fellow students in the organization

> They talked a lot about recruiting Mexican students to Michigan State, but it was a complete paradox, because a lot of those kids in MEXA were cutting classes, were getting pregnant, were completely reflecting the stereotype that we have in the United States, about Mexican workers. ... I think that they were reacting on all the stereotypes that had pushed on them, and used that energy. Used it in the same way that it was used on us. It was like, you know, "You treated me with such contempt for such a long time, that now I'll do the same thing to you." And somehow that was supposed to be good.

Although she was never involved in the organization, Sara was supportive of the activist causes that CRU and MEXA took up, such as better rights for migrant workers and is a little ashamed when she admits "being an Hispanic woman on campus I should be involved with it, but I didn't. I mean you can only be involved in so many activities and put your heart into so many things." Yet the extremist actions of the organization cause her to question what progress means. Recalling a hunger strike in support of the United Farmworkers boycott of California table grapes, she explains some of her concerns for her peers:

> It is a worthy cause, it was a worthy cause and it is getting better now, but to not eat and make yourself sick, I mean the people that ended up in the hospital, I mean, I'm wondering how they did on their, on their scores in their classes that semester. It is a great cause, but when it was all done and over with, nobody erased those zero points that they may have gotten on the homework or anything. And for me the best way that I can help my community is to become the best person that I can be.

Olga expresses a similar sentiment. While there may be a place for radicalism for some people, she sees a difference in the ways she and her Latino peers in business positively influence the image and progress of the cultural community and the issues it faces:

> I see people progressing, studying, really trying to improve themselves, and I think it's just much more positive. I think we express our feelings by achieving. We don't necessarily have a dialog, but at least we lead by example. You know, we keep on doing well, and then there's a pattern, "Well hey, these kids are doing well. They're smart kids." And even if there's no dialog, at least I know that the administration sees, 'Hey, there's Alma Martinez, there's a leader, a professional' then good.

Still other students in the study found they weren't satisfied just focusing on cultural or racial issues to the detriment of academics. "I joined NAHBS because it was a cultural group but it wasn't like MEXA or something or CRU. It was just kind of, you know, we're different but we're still gonna take care of business and worry about both racial things and school, not just racial," said Jamie. He still attends CRU meetings and events from time to time, but feels his cultural and professional home is with his Latino peers in business.

Amanda isn't sure how much she is respected by her peers in the Latino student community, especially those that are involved in the more political groups. Although she actively mentors youth in the community and has arranged numerous community service activities with other Latino business students, she senses that her commitment to the community may be questioned by her non-business student peers:

> They always seem to be like social, you know, like they want to be social workers and they seem to be more geared to the social

> aspects of helping out the community. And I think that maybe when I tell them I'm a business major that they don't see that as helping the community because, you know, I'm not directly going and helping the Latino youths or whatever. I'm going to be in the corporate world. But I think I am helping the community. I see it as helping 'cause I'm getting up in the corporate world. There's not that big of a population of Chicanos in the corporate world, and it's not going to happen unless [more of us] start joining that workforce. I don't know if they're [Latino peers] that open to realizing that what I'm going to be doing is also helping the Latino community.

Two students in the study had strong feelings about their acceptance within the larger Latino community on campus. Luisa talks about feeling like an outsider in organizations like CRU and MEXA:

> I don't identify with them because they don't identify with me. Like, they see brown face and Spanish speaking as the only people that should be there, and they see people like me, or what I perceive them to see me as, is like a half-breed "wannabe", and so I don't associate with them just because they're very racist against their own people, and against other people of other cultures. Like, there was a comment at a CRU meeting where we were talking about new years resolutions, and this one girls resolution was to get along with all the white people on campus that were annoying her, you know, which is pretty racist to me. I think they're very closed minded, like, they won't call themselves anything but MEXA, like they're not Latino, or Hispanic or Mexican, or whatever, that they're just MEXA. I just think they're very closed minded and ignorant, and, I guess they're not ignorant, but closed minded and aggressive.

It was important for Luisa to continue to explore her Mexican heritage in college, as she and her mother had done as she was growing up. It was hard for her to face exclusion from other Mexicans that seemed to tell her that she was not one of them.

When Andres chose to pledge a predominantly white fraternity during his freshman year, it had a significant impact on his potential for relationships in the Latino community. Although he was approached by Latino fraternities and men's clubs even before coming to campus, he found a home in his fraternity. Andres said the reaction of Latino peers to his choice was hard to take:

> because I chose the fraternity that I'm in now, the predominantly white fraternity, I got *a lotta, a lotta, a lotta* dirty looks, snide remarks. I was very unaccepted by my own culture up here. Just

> because I'm Mexican doesn't necessarily mean that, I would have to go that way [by joining Latino organizations] and I didn't. I think I'm more comfortable where I am now, that it's more of who I am I guess. But being snubbed by them just because I didn't choose to do the things they did. I would get the dirty looks and people stopped saying hi.

The social support Andres has gotten from his fraternity has been very important in his college life. He admits he hates to be alone in doing anything and thrives on his frat brothers' support. Yet Andres struggles to understand the exclusion he experienced from the actions of his Latino peers:

> I mean, I guess everybody can have their own opinion of who I am and, I mean, what I am but I think, I don't understand why somebody would call me a sellout. Why? Because I don't, because I'm not the stereotype Mexican? So I don't, I mean, this is gonna be like, you know, an off the wall comment, it's like so I don't work in like a tortilla factory so that means I'm a sellout because I went to college and because I'm making something of myself. This is what I'm saying, that somebody might call me a sellout for, you know, because I go to a big time university and I'm going to have a decent job when I graduate college, that would make me a sellout. In the end, I think that would make you more proud of me because, you know, I'm a Mexican who's making it. A lot of Mexicans don't make it. So I'm one that is. So people could call me a sellout, might be jealousy. Might be the fact that they hate me. Might be the fact that they hate, you know, college life and what it does to you and corporate life and whatnot but everybody's got their own opinion and I'm not living my life for anybody but me and I don't feel as though I'm selling out myself and until that day comes, I'm completely comfortable with it.

Although his peers might see his choices in peer groups (the white fraternity) and for a career in business to be in conflict with his cultural identity, Andres clearly rejects the notion that he is any less Mexican because he is "making it." The idea of being seen as a sellout or being a cultural traitor by members of one's own cultural group is a difficult one. On one hand, students receive messages that we need more Latino/a professionals, yet on the other there is an underlying fear: Does crossing borders into new social groups or advancing educationally or professionally cause an erosion of cultural identity? Olga reflects on that question:

> I don't think we have to. I think we could. I think it's possible. I think, for me, though, I'd like to retain my culture. I don't want to change living in corporate America. I do not see complications with co-workers, etc. although, you know, if there's a comment that comes my way that's derogatory, I'll immediately address it, and speak to the person. I see myself within the community, with the Mexican American community,.....but I don't see that as completely taking over my life. I mean, first and foremost, I'm an American. You know. I will be a member of "X,Y, Z." company, and I want to be a professional woman, and, while, on the one hand, I'm a Mexican American, I don't want it to overcome my complete being. Like, I don't want people to say, " There's that Mexican-American woman." I want people to say, "Oh, there's Olga. She's an excellent worker. She's an excellent asset." I want to retain my cultural identity, but I don't want it to overpower me.

Learning how to balance personal, cultural and career issues is a precarious challenge that carries the risk of social exclusion. However, peer groups and organizations that can affirm both cultural and career identity have a significant impact on students' ability to learn who and what they want to be.

Mastery through experience

Experiential learning through the job search process, work experience, and internships created especially powerful mastery experiences impacting the students' cultural and career self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997) "mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster what it takes to succeed." (p.80) As success through experience grows, so does the students' self-confidence in their abilities and in their career path. Similarly, unsuccessful outcomes may cause students to rethink their career choices or hone them more succinctly. The next phase of the discussion examines how various forms of experiential learning contribute to the interplay of career and cultural identity.

Internships

The students' business related work experiences, especially internships, help to mold the development of career identity as well as foster confidence and self-efficacy. A significant body of research suggests the impact of experiential

learning and internships on student's career development. In the cases of several students in the study, their experiences also had a significant influence in negotiating the intersections of their cultural and career identities. In the following examples, the complex interplay of the student's hopes, fears, goals and confidence with their experiences provide a salient view of the identity process.

Self-confidence and initiative can make all the difference in a student's ability to secure an internship. Tom is an outstanding sophomore student. After working in restaurants and grocery stores, he is looking forward to his first internship with the automotive company he has always wanted to work for. He got the internship by sending his resume to the company through the on campus recruiting system and was proud when he was selected for an interview.

> They had a minority career fair was like a week before my interview, and I remember I went in and talked to a recruiter there and he kind of told me that usually they don't take sophomores, so I was kind of scared as far as that went, because I wanted to get in there, so I made sure when I went to my interview, that I said something about, I'm only a sophomore, but I feel that I can perform with anyone and if given the opportunity, they wouldn't be disappointed. They told me that was a big reason on why I got the internship, you know, because I came back around at the end and told them that. And that really impressed them. So that's really how I got the internship, and it went on from there.

In his earlier work experiences, Tom said he learned about what goes on behind the scenes in business like "The order of command, you know, how efficient are these companies working, and stuff like that." Even working as a grocery stock boy, Tom was aware of how products were placed on shelves and made note of how things were different in competitor's stores. Looking ahead to the summer, Tom talks about what he'll be doing in his internship this summer and what he thinks it will be like:

> Tom: I'm going to be in their finance department. I think I've kind of been briefly informed of my duties. I'm going to be working at the truck vehicle center, and they're looking, companies like that, at cost reduction--how to make the most money out of what they have, what's the best thing to do. I think that's kind of like what I'm

going to do. There's a couple of new trucks coming out, I know I'm going to be working on, you know, as far as what are their fixed assets, and stuff like that. So I think it will be interesting, as far as, you know, this is really a company that I want to work for and that's a bigger company than I've ever worked for, so I'm kind of excited, I'm kind of nervous and scared at the same time, but, you know, I'm looking forward to it. I like new challenges, and I think it will work out.

Linda: What do you think your work climate's going to be like there? What impressions of big corporate America do you have?

Tom: I guess one thing that I kind of feel that the environment's going to be like, I think a lot of them are going to be like, "Oh, that's the intern." I'm going to be around all these older people that are a lot older than me. Not that they're old, but that they're older than me, and that they have been establishing their careers and they've been there awhile and I don't know if there will be resentment or if it will just be, "Oh, that's the intern." Kind of a different atmosphere than anything that I've been around.

Linda: What's it going to take from you to succeed in that kind of environment?

Tom: I think it's going to take a lot of hard work, you know, and I think it's going to take a lot for me to be open. I mean, there's going to be a lot of stuff that I may not know how to do. I've got to make sure that I'm not afraid to go and ask my manager or ask my supervisor, if I'm stuck or something like that. I think that has a lot to do with it, how much you communicate with the people around you, and not to be afraid of the people because more than likely they will help you if you ask them. That's what I'm looking forward to.

The most important thing Angela said she learned through her various internship experiences is

> a perspective on the real world. [laughs] Like not everyone is, you know, looking out for you, not everyone is. I don't know, it is like you are your own person. If you want to do something, you are going to do it. Kind of like you are on your own. But, I think like the main thing is that it's not necessarily a good or bad environment. It is not that there wasn't teamwork and group work, but at the same time, it is just like you realize you have a lot of responsibility, a lot of work on your shoulders, like people are depending on you.

As a freshman, Angela worked a summer job with a data management company.

She found herself doing her work and that of her team partner who showed little interest in working or getting things right. In the end, her supervisor gave her a strong evaluation "very dependable, I am a hard worker. But hard worker was my only evaluation, but it didn't bother me. It is like I'd rather have something to do than just sit there." Wanting to move on to a different experience, Angela set her sights on an internship in the automotive industry. She interviewed with an automotive company at the campus career center and was thrilled when they called her back for an on-site second interview.

> they had me take this exam right when I got there. It was like okay, entrance exam thing you have to pass before you get into GM or whatever, and all math, right? Not my strong suit. They have it timed, they have the timer like right sitting on the table and there is this lady like staring at me while I take the test. And this ticker is like ticking one thing at a time like this and I'm like doing this exam. And she grades it right in front of me when I'm done, I'm like already almost on the verge of tears because I'm like, okay, I did not pass that. And she is like, "Angela, well maybe we will be interested in looking at you next year or something. You didn't pass the exam," and all this stuff. And I'm like "Oh my God!" you know? I'm like, "I can't believe math is going to hold me back once again." I'm like "screw me over out of an internship when I know I can do the job." I just couldn't pass the exam.

Although she was devastated, Angela made a case for herself with the exam administrator, emphasizing her interest in the company and her confidence that she could do the job. Angela had surprising results from that conversation: "Even though she wasn't even like the person in charge of hiring, whatever, I don't know if she conveyed my message or what. But like they called me back and like I don't know, like tossed the exam or like scooted it under the floor, whatever, but they just kind of let it by, they just let it go and they let me in and I was just so relieved."

Angela excelled in her role at the company and returned the following summer to a more responsible position with more money. Her experiences in the company taught her differences in managing styles and team dynamics, but mostly about her major. "I learned a lot about my major and what people do on a

daily basis. Ah, and it is interesting, like I said, the same things what I learned on the internship and what I've been seeing now is it is always changing. The company still doesn't have the right process laid out and they are still, you know, working at it, still having meetings, and it is fun though, [laughs] I like it."

Career and Cultural Identity in the Workplace

Andres was a general business major toying with the idea of supply chain management when he got his first internship with a Japanese automaker. Active in student organizations and armed with a competitive grade point average, Andres went to a campus career fair. Thinking back about how he got the internship he laughs and remembers "walking around, handing in a resume which had like waiting tables experience and busboy experience. So I think it was probably my interview. I'm not, I mean, I'm a pretty easy person to talk to, I like to think anyway. So that's probably what got me my internship and it was a good internship."

As a sophomore at the time, he didn't have a lot of business classes, but Andres took on the challenges of his position.

> It was a real job. I mean, I did real, real on job experience. I did the same thing that all the other people in my group did but looking back on what I know now of like my job function, it was just like entry level basis, you know, purchase orders and getting requisitions and stuff like that from people. So it was a basic job but I mean, it taught me a little bit about, at least Japanese corporate world because it definitely wasn't the American corporate world.

Yet the biggest challenge for Andres wasn't the work itself, it was the environment of being in a small, predominantly white town out of state. "It was a very bad living environment for me," he said "a very, very racist town, very uninviting, unwelcoming. I was miserable." He found himself driving three hours every weekend to go home or back to campus. There were two incidents that Andres shared to explain the kind of environment he found in that small town.

Walking into work one morning around 7:30 a.m., Andres encountered an older white man walking out of the plant.

> he asked me if I was going the wrong way and I said, oh no, I'm the lucky one who gets the star right now. I was joking. He said, 'Yeah, all you fucking minorities get the good jobs just because of the color of your skin,' meaning that he thought that I was, I take it, an assembly line worker. At [the company] we all wore white uniforms, everybody from office to the president of the company to the assembly line worker. I guess he assumed that I was going in to work the assembly line and I got an early shift, 'cuz there's like a ten year waiting period. You have to work nightshift before you get to work regular morning shift. So I guess he just assumed that because I was Mexican I got the early shift when actually it was my internship. I worked in the office and there wasn't a second or third shift for the office.

Andres tried to logically analyze the situation thinking that "if he logically would have looked at me, I was 19. He was 54. Maybe I wasn't working on the assembly line but who knows?" Andres was initially going to file a complaint against the worker. After some thought, he decided that "it wasn't worth my time or my effort to do anything about it. He was gonna think what he wanted to...it didn't make me uncomfortable to go and work." Andres talked about his mentor at the company about the experience. He describes his biggest reaction to the incident as realizing that "there are people here [at the company] like that."

Andres also encountered racial situations in the community that summer. On his way home from work, he was pulling out of a shopping center when "this guy on this motorcycle like pulled up and said, 'Why don't you go back to Africa, you fuckin' nigger.' I started to shout something back but he was like this 250 pound hippy-looking guy and I thought, 'you know, if you have enough guts to stop and say that to me, I don't know if you have something on you.'" Deciding it was best just to drive away, Andres went home to his apartment. Reflecting on the experience, he said

> I've felt prejudice in my life, I mean, even when I was younger, I'd be walking around a store with my mom and obviously there's like secret security following you around. It's completely obvious when

> they do it. They think they're being slick but they're not. I mean, I felt it. I know what it's like. I just, I don't think I feel it all the time.

Andres refuses to let incidents such as these impact his work or career plans. Neither experience dissuaded him from pursuing his career in corporate America. "If anything," he said, " it limited my thought of the rest of humanity, but I don't think it had anything to do with my job or my job function. That was secure."

Many of the students expressed concerns about whether their internship offers were based on their minority status wondering, "Did I get the job just because I'm a minority?" Alma laughs when she talks about the impact of the "Latino Explosion" in popular culture, food, and the workplace. "I almost want to say that now there is even more help because everybody wants the new thing and the new thing is Latinos," she said. "Honestly, you know, I couldn't believe it when it was first taking place, but it is crazy now, everybody just wants to be a part of the fad and the fad right now is the Latinos. [laughs] You know, so almost right now is kind of like, 'oh no we want you, oh no come back, oh please call us' back kind of thing. And sometimes I almost think what do they want me just because I'm Latino or because I can really do it." Luisa believes she's been treated differently because of her cultural background:

> I think a lot of the opportunities I've gotten have been because they saw Hispanic on my resume. Like, Native American and Hispanic Students on my resume, or because they knew I was associated with Multicultural Business Programs and they figured, "Well, she's not black. She must be Hispanic." And with the name Luisa, you know, and so I think it has gotten me special privileges and stuff, like job opportunities, and different opportunities, but only opportunities. I haven't seen it hold me back from anything, or become a burden, or become an obstacle. No one's treated me any differently in a bad way because I've been Hispanic, but I've noticed people have just given me more opportunities.

After Andres's experience with the Japanese automaker, his view of opportunities based on race and culture are markedly different. Realizing that his first internship offer may well have been based on his ethnic background, he's

quite clear about how he would respond given a similar situation. "If I was offered the internship this summer and I went there and I saw that they had 25 interns and 18 were minorities, I think I would quit because you're only hiring me based on the fact that I'm a minority." Andres expresses a common theme that other students talked about with regard to their ethnic background and their career achievement and opportunity:

> I guess good in some aspects if it's gonna get me to where I want to be in life, it's not a crutch to me. Being Mexican is not a crutch. It's not something that I think people should help me because I'm Mexican. If there is somebody better qualified who's white, hire that person. I don't want you to help me because I'm Mexican. I don't need your help... I don't want anybody handing anything to me. I don't need anything handed to me. I'll work for what I get and I'll be happy with that.

Andres' response to racial and ethnic challenges in the workplace draws on the confidence he has in himself to work and achieve in his career. The opportunity to work and prove oneself in the workplace is an important expression of one's career and cultural identity. As Bandura has suggested success that arises from achievement serves as the most powerful influence on individual efficacy.

Building confidence through experience

Sara's internship experiences highlight some typical concerns and fears that students encounter in experiential learning. From first encounter to earned success, her experiences take her through a variety of intersections of cultural and career identity. Thinking back to her first career fair, Sara laughs at the haphazard way she decided to go, "I got the e-mail the day before and I said, 'Oh why the hell not, just put on a suit.'" With several copies of a resume she had written only the night before, she managed to get several interviews at the annual minority career fair. Her initial intention was to just get the experience of interviewing, however her first interviews blossomed into her first internship offers. "I interviewed with several companies. I got job offers from all of them," she said, "I don't know how or why, they just liked something about me. 'Cause I

had no experience whatsoever." Sara ended up choosing a major hotel chain because of name recognition and a location that would allow her to be near enough to her family, but "far enough away where I still had that independence for the summer." Sara said it was a great experience for her, despite her initial concerns:

> I was a little bit suspicious as to why they were looking for specifically minority students. I didn't want to when I got there for the employees to be like, 'Well they only hired her 'cause she's Mexican and you know, they needed to fill their quota and look at her, she's got no experience.' So I was a very shy about showing up to work the very first day. But, nobody even knew. Nobody even mentioned anything or even cared. And there just so happened to be other HB students that were there from MSU that were there too as well. And they weren't minorities, so it kind of helped out. I felt really good about it.

That internship was Sara's first job, and she found herself sorting through some of her ideas about the hospitality field and the kinds of experiences she expected as an intern from an employer. Her academic department requires that first internships provide a full rotation through all functions of the hospitality business. However, sometimes those requirements aren't appreciated by students in how they are carried out by employers.

> By the end of the internship I wasn't too sure if I even wanted to stay in the industry. I remember going through my exit interview and telling them all the things that I did not appreciate that happened to me. The things that I thought should be changed for improvement and I even said, you know, I'm not so sure I ever want to come back or ever work for [that hotel chain] again. They are a great company and everything, but at that point in my life I wasn't too sure about it. And I was still a little bit bitter because they made me do housekeeping work when that's not what I was there for. I wasn't there to learn how to dust light bulbs and make beds and clean toilets. And they only made me do it for a week, but I was still, I was just mad about it.

Reflecting back on the positives, Sara said that the internship was helpful in that she had a rotation that gave her a broad exposure to the hotel industry. She said, "I didn't know what it was like to be in a managerial position or be in a supervisor and I got little bit of experience in every, in everything that the front

office has to do with, which is housekeeping, bell stand, hotel operator, being a desk clerk, all of those things I got to taste just a little bit of everything. And that was to help me figure out whether or not I wanted to do this for the rest of my life."

Sara's second internship experience took her to one of the largest hotels in Chicago. "And that place was huge when I was first there, I got lost for the first week every day. I couldn't make it from the locker room to the front desk. [laughs] I'd get lost." Assigned as a clerk to the front desk, she soon proved her self a quick study, learning the computerized property management system in record time. But the greatest lessons Sara learned in the internship were about people and her ability to lead.

> Then one day I show up in the manager's uniform and the clerks were pissed. They didn't know that I was an intern. They didn't know that I was there for that purpose. And they thought, one of them even said to me, 'Who did you sleep with to get a promotion so quickly?' [laughs] It was just like, 'Excuse me. I'm an intern, I'm just a little girl.' So that was rough. But I learned how to deal with it and I learned how to gain their respect, to get them to listen to me when I've got things for them to do. I learned a lot about myself, I learned a lot about what it is to have to keep that power distance between you as a manager and your employees, but also at the same time, not to be their enemy.

By the end of the summer, Sara knew that she was valued because no one wanted her to leave. She was asked to stay, but refused in favor of returning to school. She was surprised when she heard from them so quickly after she left, "they even called me a month after school started and asked me to come back. So, I did, I learned so much there." Upon her return Sara was assigned to a key role in the front office.

> I was not only responsible for the daily reports at the office --- it is a whole lot of things that I won't even go in to, because it is very technical. But, I had to keep track of what housekeeping is doing, what the bell staff was doing, what sales and marketing is doing. It was like the front office is the hub of everything, and if I don't do my job, then I leave holes for their jobs [and] it doesn't work like a machine. There is a gear missing, you know. It is all going to fall

> apart and that was my job. For such a big place where I'm supervising the staff of maybe 12 desk clerks and taking care of a 2,000 room property, and I'm, you know, just 21 years old. At first, I felt like 'Oh my God, I can't believe they just left this all for me and then they'd all take off and go to lunch.' [laughs] But I did it, and I did it well enough to where my superiors recognized that. And they really said that they were impressed. They did not realize that I could do those things.

Sara's experiences represent a coming of age with regard to her personal achievement potential and career development. But, not unlike other students in their internships she was able to teach the organization about the potential of interns to excel in their assignments. Sara is emphatic about the value of her internships, "I would never trade my internship experiences for anything and I'm glad that our major forces you could do them before you graduate. I have a much better idea of what it takes to succeed."

Olga's experience in a payment processing center of a utility company made a significant impact on her career development and professional confidence. After a couple of years, Olga earned more responsibility and managerial assignments. "I think my boss recognized my talent and my abilities, and he did have me run meetings, staff meetings, head meetings with district managers and regional managers." Making professional presentations, she said "I really felt like a business person." Eventually she made a presentation to a few of the vice presidents. "They were really impressed. They said I did a really good job. The only thing they said was that I had to take the emotion out of my presentation, which is completely typical of me, because I'm so passionate about what I do," she laughs.

Bolstered by praise and opportunities, Olga eventually was managing processors in the payment center.

> I absolutely loved it. I loved the responsibility, loved the challenges, and I actually ended up refining the process, so that we would triple the amount of work that we processed, so, on Saturdays, we're used to processing about four million dollars. Well, after, like, my little experiment, we started processing sixteen, eighteen, twenty

> million, and you know, the interest on that money was huge. It was just all those dollars, is very significant, especially when you nickel and dime it, so I was really proud of myself. Just from manipulating the work, and the process management, which is, that's the basics of what I was doing. I didn't realize the fact that I was doing, like, managing part of the supply chain. I increased the efficiency in decreasing the amount of workers that we needed, and I was just so proud of myself. Then, that's when I realized, "You know what? I can do this. I can do it."

Even though she didn't realize it at the time she working at the payment center, her experiences were predictive of her eventual major choice in supply chain management. Like many other students, she didn't really know about specific fields in business like supply chain management. She knew she wanted business but ended up ruling out fields that didn't' seem a good fit . "I didn't like marketing. I didn't like finance. Didn't like accounting, etc. I didn't really like anything, and I didn't want to do general business. And Econ, you know, in the college of business, it's not like a business major, per se. Hospitality Business was out. Not working weekends and holidays." Probably one of the most significant influences on major choice for Olga and the other Supply Chain Management majors in the study was the influence of peers and a Latino role model named Juvé who was just a few years ahead of them. Coming from an active migrant background and leaving his home state to come to the university, Juvé was an excellent student who was active in NAHBS. He held several internships, one taking him to Mexico as an operations intern for a U.S. manufacturing company. Olga recalls several conversations with Juvé about supply chain. "Juvé was studying supply chain and we would just talk about it...what it involved and everything like that, you know? And then I was like 'that sounds like my work at Consumers, and I really loved it. Like, I really loved it, and I thought, I love organization. I love organizing stuff. I love having things work in a system and be efficient.' I said. 'I think I'd probably be really good at that.' And I think I am."

Olga was able to land an internship with a Latino manufacturing company before she graduated. She was recommended for the position with the company directly by a couple of key advisers at the university over lunch. She was incredulous that advisers, people she admired, would take the initiative to recommend her so highly. She reflects, "Wow, they really helped me out, and that's how I got the job, and that was great. I really had a chance to see a lot of things, and now that I'm in my classes, my major classes, I can see how much, how much I've learned. How much knowledge I've gained just from witnessing everything in the company." Being able to integrate her classroom knowledge helped Olga to affirm her skills and professional competence. She looks a back on her internship with the manufacturing company as integral in providing a framework for her career and her education in supply chain management. "I can see how difficult it would be for students who haven't had internships, because, you get all this knowledge. You know, you read and you learn, and take tests, but it doesn't mean anything. If you have a framework, you can correlate things. 'I don't know if that's exactly what we did in transportation...Oh, that's exactly what we did in transportation.'" Olga is an excellent case example of the impact that internships and practical work experiences have on academic learning, self-confidence and awareness of one's own career potential and opportunities. Being able to reinforce her learning with experience and her experience with her learning is integral to Olga's developing career identity.

Barriers, Efficacy and Vision

Determination and confidence are core issues in developing a career identity and engaging in the culture surrounding that career. As the students struggle to establish themselves as a business major in college, they also begin to engage in the culture of the business profession, adapting norms and behaviors consistent with the vision of the person they want to be. However, in

becoming that person, students also struggle with issues relating to their cultural selves. How do social barriers, perceived or real, impact the students' vision for success in business? Does success mean changing or losing one's cultural self? What does it mean to be a successful Mexican American business professional?

As a senior one semester from graduation, Carlos looks forward to his first steps in his business career, by reflecting on his transition to college. He explains his philosophy of first steps which prove very revealing to his sense of self-efficacy:

> You have no knowledge of what you're getting yourself into. And you've got to take that first step to go in to that type of environment to figure out what is going on, and a lot of people don't like to do that. Like, for example, I didn't know anything about college. I didn't even know what I was getting myself into. I knew the outcome, or I had an idea of the outcome of what going through college is, but exactly what it takes to actually get through college? I didn't have the slightest clue. So that's what I'm talking about when I mean taking your first step, is actually making that decision that I'm going to do it, and then you're there. That's the first step.

Confidence has a lot to do with being able to take those first steps. Christian doesn't believe he'll encounter barriers that will limit his success in business. He looks to the example of his father and uncles who have been able to do well for themselves. However, underlying that is his internal sense of determination and confidence in his own preparation and ability to take a risk. He refuses to see issues of culture as anything but an asset:

> Confidence, and confidence. I feel you have to be confident. I feel you have to be a good presenter, to have good communication skills, and you have to be a team worker. You have to work with a team, because I've been exposed to a lot of teams up here at Michigan State, and the people that I've talked to, it's no more just like you've got to turn in a paper and that's it. You're going to be worked in focus groups, and you've got to work well with others, and be confident in yourself, and uh, one of the main things, one other thing that I would believe in, is that if you say something, make sure that you can back it up. Make sure you have facts. You can't really go into the business world and say something without proving it. Don't go on, like, assumption. You have to be, that's kind of to go with your confidence. To kind of make sure you can back up anything you say with facts. I can see myself being successful because I'm a Latino, but not seeing myself, I don't see myself any

> different than what I said before. Because of the different cultures that I've been exposed to, that is an asset, but coming down as being confident, and being a team player and all that, I still think that has no boundary as to race.

In an opposing view, Andres believes there are barriers that can limit a person of color's opportunity and success. He knows that ethnic racial prejudices exist and he's experienced them, both from the white rural workers on his internship and from Latino's on campus when he joined a white fraternity. Yet, just tell Andres he can't do something and his determination quickly focuses on the challenge and not the barrier:

> See, if you tell me I can't do it then I'm definitely gonna do it. I might do it half butt way. I might do it to the greatest, I mean to the best that somebody else could do it as but I mean, I'll do. I'll get it done. It's, you just gotta, [with] big challenges you got to chip away at it and you got to think about it logically, you know. I don't like people telling me that I can't do something. Nobody knows somebody else's limits. I'm the only person who knows how far I can push myself and even, I really don't think that I know my own limits, like you know, you only push yourself so far to accomplish certain things. I don't know, I have personally never pushed myself to the brink like I just possibly cannot do this anymore. I've never had to do that.

When Eliana thinks about graduating and her career it has cultural significance for her. She is aware that "not a lot of minorities that actually graduate from college and get their degree and have those big-time paying jobs out there," but for Eliana the most important thing about her education and career success is "so I could help all my family." Looking ahead to joining the workforce in business, she is a little tentative:

> It's kinda scary, I think, 'cuz it's just those big, top head people out there and I think, 'cuz I'm not, I don't think I'm prepared yet. I need to work on my communication skills. I'm kinda scared sometimes and I get, I'm kinda shy to speak up and I just think I gotta work on it and it's gonna be hard 'cuz, especially when it comes, like I told you I have problems with interviews, I get so like nervous and I just don't know how to be, show my confidence I guess.

Eliana acknowledges that there may be gender barriers she'll encounter "you don't see that many females period at the top or maybe Latina up at the top of

the corporate America, like the president for example. There's always just men and it just seems like they just have prejudice also against a woman being at the top." However, Eliana won't let that stand in her way. Her success, she said "would just depend on myself how confident I am and how hard I could work up to get up that high."

Angela's concerns revolve around being an attractive Mexican woman in Corporate America. She knows that some of her of the managers and colleagues she encountered during her internships made comments like "she's too cute" which sometimes took away from their ability to view her as a professional. She talks about what it takes to earn respect in the workplace:

> It is almost like you want to be yourself, you want to be comfortable in your environment in corporate America, but at the same time, you have to constantly know that you are being reviewed, you are being examined more critically than other people. I guess that goes the same for even being Mexican and a woman, it is just like I've always heard that tune, it is just like you have to be twice as good, as the white person next to you in order for people to give you some respect.

Ideally, Angela believes respect and promotions should be merit based on what she has accomplished professionally, but she acknowledges, "I don't think that it is even possible to go through corporate America as a Mexican-American female that will be eventually in upper management without having those things (sexual comments) said. But, I mean I'll deal with that. I've dealt with other things and I'll deal with it."

Angela is very determined to accomplish each of her life's goals. She plans to marry shortly after graduation and start a family. "My main dilemma right there is how I'm going to fit in a master's degree from a well accredited school that's going to want three years of work experience on top of work and then on top of having children probably at that time as well. It is going to be a big, big, big mess, but it *is* going to happen."

For Carlos to envision his success in business, he had to learn to be competitive which, he admits was one of the hardest things he's ever done...

> Only because growing up in the migrant community, you don't know how to compete. They don't teach you to be competitive. Even in sports. I wasn't a competitor. I loved to play. I played my hardest, but I didn't mind losing, because I knew I did the best I can. So, in that aspect, of being more competitive to win was very difficult because in college, that's what you have to do. You have to be determined and eager to want that, and it's something that I didn't have because I was never taught.

Looking to the future, Carlos defines success in his own terms; "It's setting goals, focus, determination, knowing that you're going to have to struggle, the ability to overcome the struggles, and learn from them...Not only for yourself, but for others." But it is in serving as a role model for other Latinos that is the most important success he wants to achieve:

> Like I said, I haven't been out to the business world, and money is not everything to me. To me, anyhow. Growing up without money, to me, wasn't always my first priority. I think it's more or less the ability to love what you're doing. That's when I feel like I'm going to be happy. Really, the status doesn't count. It's more or less, me helping others. I think that's what it is.

Integrating Career and Cultural Identity

In the discussion thus far we have observed how transitions into new environments, such as college and workplace situations have salient implications for an individual's cultural identity and developing career identity. Congruent with student development theory, students separate from their families and home communities as they encounter new ideas, people and possibilities for their lives through their college experiences. As students move through their developmental process in college, we have seen differences between cultural and professional value systems emerge. For example, as students succeed or make choices in favor of their academic and career development, some have been accused of "selling out." This suggests that as one endeavors to move beyond cultural boundaries into new territory, one becomes less connected or

committed to one's cultural roots. This notion is not supported by the data collected from these students. Thirteen of seventeen students overtly expressed the importance of their career success in making a difference for other Mexican Americans in communities and businesses. If anything, the students demonstrate a commitment to integrating their cultural heritage and traditions into their lives. Maintaining language and family values are indices of the students' cultural identity.

The strongest indicators of the students' cultural values are their expectations for their children. Most of the students, whether first generation or third generation, spoke of encouraging or teaching their children to learn Spanish as an important part of their heritage. Consistent with this, Alma candidly describes her peer group's expectations to meet and marry a Latino who speaks Spanish. She said the reason for this is her peers

> know that that's how they want their children to grow up. Learning both, speaking both languages. See, most of the time what I found is that their parents have pretty much deprived them of learning Spanish first for the reason that they don't want, because the way the parents might have suffered not knowing English and having to learn it. They don't want their children to suffer the same way. So, in that way they deprive them and they don't realize that they are going to suffer even more in the future. Because of not knowing their own true language. Which is sad to me. But even those friends they see that now too, and they say, "You know, man I wish my mom would have taught me how to speak Spanish and so and so." I just get so mad and frustrated. And I feel sorry for those kids too, because they really, really want to know it.

Angela wants her children to be fluent in both languages, but more importantly share her cultural work, family and religious values. She and her Latino fiancé have shared numerous conversations about how their children will be raised. Their wish is for their children to understand their cultural heritage and be successful in both career and family.

Perhaps the best summary of how these students' see the journey that belies the intersections of their cultural and career identity is in this quote from *The New Mextiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa:

> To separate from my culture (as from my family), I had to feel competent enough on the outside and secure enough on the inside to live life on my own. Yet in leaving home, I did not lose touch with my origins because *lo mexicano* is in my system. I am a turtle, wherever I go, I carry home on my back.

CHAPTER 5:

Discussion of Findings, Implications and Conclusions

Successfully crossing borders and attaining one's academic and career goals have a significant impact on the individual's capacity for social learning. As individuals experience success, confidence in their abilities to achieve grows, in Bandura's terms, their self-efficacy increases. Self-efficacy is a driving force in the intersection of cultural and career identity, but it is produced by both as well. People with a high level of self-efficacy believe in their ability to master different types of life challenges and environmental demands. As the students in this study mastered experiences integral to their career development, the confidence that ensued bolstered their sense of self-efficacy. In short, confidence tended to support successful achievements; and successful achievements tended to enhance confidence. In this chapter, I discuss the major findings and limitations of the study.

The findings of this study clearly underscore the salience of self-efficacy in how students negotiated intersections of career and cultural identity. The research questions raised at the outset of this study, provide the best framework for organizing a meaningful discussion of the various findings which emerged from my interviews with the students. The primary focus of analysis was to develop an understanding of the meaning students construct around their cultural heritage and how such constructions influence career choices and their evolving professional identity. The following questions guided my analysis:

1) *What personal and social factors shape students' conceptions of a professional business identity? What is the relative importance of these factors?*

2) *How do the Latino student's college experiences facilitate change in the development of a professional identity?*

3) *How do students mediate differences between cultural and professional value systems, if they exist?*

4) Do new cultural systems emerge from the intersection of cultural and professional identity in Latino business students?

In the following section, I discuss findings of the study around the research questions that guided my inquiry.

Summary of Findings

What personal and social factors shape students' conceptions of a professional business identity? What is the relative importance of these factors?

Social, economic, and media images of business professionals had strong influences on initial career aspirations despite the striking lack of Latino/a professional role models. The students generally envisioned themselves having a life-work style associated with business such as wearing a suit, carrying a briefcase, and working in an office setting. The potential for wealth was another factor which influenced students' ideas about careers in business, although there were some wide differences in how students' thought of wealth. For Carlos and Eliana, both from migrant backgrounds, building a successful career in business was a means for improving the quality of life for their families. For Olga, a business career is a means of affording finer things in life, such as vacations and nice homes. Both family and the economic conditions the students' experienced growing up had a salient influence on the students' academic and career identity. Sixteen of the seventeen students in the study came from working class or low-income backgrounds. The students' general desire to improve their economic circumstances and those of their families was a significant motivation in their choices for college and in business as a major, that they perceived would help them achieve a better standard of living. Students generally believed that the example of their success would be an asset to the advancement of other Latino/as in their community.

How do the Latino student's college experiences facilitate change in the development of a professional identity?

The students' conceptions of a professional business identity were further shaped through social, academic, and professional mastery experiences throughout their college years. Overcoming obstacles, such as social adjustment to campus, academic achievement, and internships, had a positive effect on students' self efficacy which supported their emerging identity as a successful Latino/a business major. Mastery experiences increased students' personal and career confidence levels especially as students participated in career-related activities. The students' reflections on their career related achievements through internships, work experiences and professional conferences clearly demonstrate increased career confidence levels and crystallization of career choices.

Peer associations in college impact both career and cultural identity development. Peer associations with other Latino business majors fostered links between professional and cultural worlds. Students who participated in the Native American and Hispanic Business Students organization and the National Hispanic Business Student Leadership conference benefited from a sense of collective efficacy by engaging in career related activities with co-ethnic peers. According to Bandura (1997), collective efficacy is perceived by group members and can be defined as "a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments" (p. 477). Students' involvement with co-ethnic peers engaged in the pursuit of similar career goals in business not only created a culturally relevant support system, but also afforded contact with co-ethnic peer role models at different stages of their career development in business. This is an especially salient factor given the absence of professional role models on the business faculty as co-ethic peer role models appear to have filled this void.

Participation in predominately white or multicultural business-oriented student groups also provided a source of efficacy in the students' emerging career identity. According to Bandura (1986) interactions with peers provide individuals with the opportunity to compare their achievements and career competencies in relation to others. Students tended to value interactions with peers outside their co-ethnic groups as an asset to their career development in business. By learning about cultures other than their own, students felt they were becoming better prepared to interact within increasingly global business markets.

Interactions with co-ethnic peers in college tended to foster the development of a deeper personal understanding of the student's heritage and cultural identity. For most of the students in the study, the campus Latino/a community was an opportunity to connect a much larger group of co-ethnic peers than they had been in contact with in their home communities in Michigan. As they interacted with the Latino/a community on campus, students made decisions about what it meant to be Latino/a especially with regard to language. Generally, students felt that peers who were fluent in Spanish were "more Latino/a" than those who only spoke English. Some students felt tension with co-ethnics outside of business who were engaged in Chicano political activism. Although business students were generally supportive of cultural causes, many expressed a level of discomfort with methods they identified as radical. Students in the study felt that their greatest contribution to their Latino/a cultural community would be in their academic, professional, and economic achievements thereby creating opportunities and ideals for other Latino/as in the examples they set. Others advocated working within the system to affect changes important to their cultural communities.

One of the most striking practical implications of the study is the potential for peer associations to create a sense of collective efficacy to assist students in

reaching their educational and professional goals. In the absence of role models, the students in the study drew support and confidence from their collective achievements. They often measured their experience and achievements against their peers as a source of vicarious experience and learning that Bandura identifies as a source of efficacy information. This suggests that college educators can support student development and success by supporting student peer associations that are both culturally and professionally relevant.

How do students mediate differences between cultural and professional value systems, if they exist?

In transitioning to their college life, students in the study experienced changes in relationships with both co-ethnic and non co-ethnic peers from their home communities. As they made choices to pursue academics and college, some students felt alienated from peers in their home communities. Alienation from home community peers tended to be greater among students whose high school associates did not pursue college. Some students, like Sara and Andres were called "sell-outs" by co-ethnic peers due to their academic and career choices. Alienation by co-ethnic peers based on these factors indicates a level of difference between some cultural and professional value systems.

If academic and career success come with the price of alienation from cultural peers, this could present a perceived barrier to Latino/as who would seek professional career roles in which Latino/as have been under-represented. However, students tended to mediate values based on goal orientation, personal commitment, hard work and achievement, as well as the support of their co-ethnic peers in business. Their goals integrate cultural, family, professional and economic elements. Students regarded their academic and career success as their contribution to improving their families' quality of life and their cultural communities. Students in the study demonstrated high levels of self-determination and refused to accept limitations imposed by familial, cultural, or

professional norms. Eliana's determination to further her education despite her father's wishes in itself may not have succeeded, if it were not for social learning and mastery experiences that served to build her confidence as she achieved her goals. Consider the resilience in which students in the study responded to prejudice and racist experiences with a commitment to succeed in spite of what others' thought. The ability to persevere in the face of bigotry and malevolent social behavior is mediated by both the students' sense of efficacy in their work roles and their security in their cultural identity. As students mediate the developmental intersections of cultural and career identity, their confidence and resolve to pursue their goals increases. It is this resolve that sustains students' choices to join predominately white or multicultural organizations, knowing that they may face rejection by some co-ethnic peers. The process of mediating cultural and career values does not seem to lessen the students' commitments to preserving their cultural heritage or passing cultural knowledge to their children. The confidence the students demonstrated in expressing their cultural values and pursuing career goals clearly indicates a high level of self-efficacy.

Do new cultural systems emerge from the intersection of cultural and professional identity in Latino business students?

In a word, yes. Students' cultural and career identities are interwoven in their pursuit of professional goals. However, as with any change, there are both benefits and costs. Encountering unfamiliar or untested terrain is often a cause for apprehension as well as excitement. As students in the study move into new professional worlds as a result of their career choices, they were at times apprehensive about the prospect of losing their culture. The underlying fear being, "Am I really sellout? Am I betraying my culture in favor of my career success?" The reality that this fear exists stems from the history and contemporary influence of social structures that have limited access to

opportunity such that those of certain cultural backgrounds cannot equate their cultural heritage with professional success. For the most part, the students' dealt with this fear by relying on the belief that their examples of academic and career achievement are assets to the advancement of their cultural communities. Bandura (1997) provides some valuable insight in to the process of social and cultural change:

> New practices usually threaten existing status and power relations. In addition, adopters (of change) have to abandon secure routines and learn new ways of doing things. Many are reluctant to go through the intimidating and tedious process of mastering new competencies. Those with an insecure sense of efficacy are intimidated by the new demands and the prospect of failure...people are understandably wary of forsaking practices of established utility for new ones of possibly better but uncertain benefit. Those with limited means or insecure status can ill-afford to risk mistakes. As a result, most adhere to traditional ways until they see innovations that produce benefits for bolder adopters. (p. 512)

The students in the study clearly demonstrate high levels of self-efficacy, which identifies them as "bold adopters" of change, to use Bandura's terminology. They are pioneers of sorts, venturing along career terrains where a disproportionate number of other Mexican Americans have gone before, and potentially, into corporate organizations that have not traditionally valued Mexican American culture. We know that identity and culture simultaneously influence each other on both psychological and social levels. The process of identity development and change in social systems such as culture are dynamic, changing over both individual life cycles and generations. Bandura's thoughts on the social diffusion of new ideas and social practices are particularly salient at this point in our discussion.

> Societies are continuously faced with pressures to change some of their traditional institutions and social practices in efforts to improve the quality of life. These benefits cannot be gained without displacing some entrenched customs and adopting new social organizations and technologies. The benefits of change thus carry some social costs. The basic principles governing diffusions of innovation within society operate similarly in the intercultural dissemination of new ideas and practices... Foreign practices are

> rarely adoptable unaltered and in their entirety. Rather, imported elements are usually reshaped and synthesized with indigenous patterns into forms befitting the host culture. In most instances, it is functional equivalents, rather than exact replicas of foreign ways that are adopted. (1997, p. 511)

As students in the study experienced intersections of career and cultural identity, they mediated new ideas and social practices they encountered along the way. In doing so, they created new meanings for themselves in what it means to be a successful Latino/a in business. They tended to weave their values and vision of family, cultural heritage, career achievement, and community into the fabric of their lives linking their professional achievement to the advancement of their cultural communities.

Implications arising from this study of the intersection of cultural and career identity in Mexican American business students suggest changes in cultural systems that impact both cultural and professional communities. Further study following this line of inquiry may help us to better understand the evolving and multidimensional nature of the identity process as individuals create meaning in their lives and exert collective influence on cultural and social practices.

Limitations of the Study

This study has a number of limitations inherent to qualitative inquiry. First, the study is bound by time and context. The experiences of Mexican Americans in college in mid-Michigan may be quite different than experiences of Mexican Americans in the Southwest, or even in mid-western cities such as Chicago. As described in Chapter Three, Mexican American and Latino/a students account for only a fraction of a percent (.5%) of the total number of business students at the university. Given this reality, the study is also limited by the small number of participants and the relatively small population of students at the research site. However, the salient point here is that the Mexican American students involved

in this study *felt* different than other students at the predominately white-institution, even other minority groups. The variances between the students' cultural experiences before college were widely distinct. However, it is clear that students' college experiences facilitated growth in their cultural identity. Confronted with a campus community very different from their home community, students tended to seek out others with similar cultural backgrounds and experience and built a sense of belonging, or niche, within that peer group. While it can be argued that most students encounter a sense of difference and challenge in their transition to college, it is especially pronounced for students of color. One of the most important things we can learn from this study is how significant peer groups are to the personal and career development of minority students in college. The Mexican American business students in this study had no co-ethnic role models on the business faculty at their institution, with most other Mexican American faculty holding positions in the social sciences and liberal arts. The study provides evidence that the Mexican American business students often felt at odds with co-ethnic peers outside of business. The lack of role models and the differences within the Mexican American cultural community on campus were unique situational factors that enhanced the students' development of co-ethnic peer groups among Latino business majors. The peer group became a self-sustaining role model group that facilitated the students' ability to affect both institutional change and change in themselves by breaking away from what they perceived to be cultural norms in their non-business co-ethic peers.

As identity, culture heritage and career orientations are simultaneously and reciprocally influenced by each other as well as other experiences, the study is not widely generalizable. Most of the students who participated in this study between 1998 and 2000 have entered the business workforce and are expected

to be at a different level of identity development as they have integrated new professional and life experiences. Generalizabilty is also limited by the small number of participants in the study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the knower and the known are interdependent -- inseparable. My role as interviewer and researcher in this study may also be seen as a limitation. My experiences as an academic and student organization advisor to the Latino/a business student population for ten years may serve as an asset for understanding the students as a relative insider, but may also be a source of unintended bias. Generally, I believe my experience and reputation within the Latino/a community afforded me a greater level of trust among participants I interviewed for the study. However, such trust is also a great responsibility. I wanted to assure that I did not include any potentially sensitive information about the participant that they did not expressly consent to that I might have gleaned from former interactions with them outside the context of the interview. As I conducted the interviews for the study, I asked some questions that students felt I already knew the answer to, due to my prior interactions with them.

Another potential limitation of the study may lie in the cultural bias of the researcher. As I was engaged in researching a culture different from my own, my interpretations of experiences are influenced by my ignorance and bias, however unintended. In order to assure accuracy in my interpretations, I employed a number of member checks and professional checks throughout the research process. I asked probing questions within interviews and repeated responses that were confusing to me back to the subject in order to verify my understanding and verified some of my interpretations with participants as I was analyzing themes inherent in the data. I consulted with Latino/a colleagues and

researchers to assist in the development of my interview protocol and check the accuracy of my interpretations.

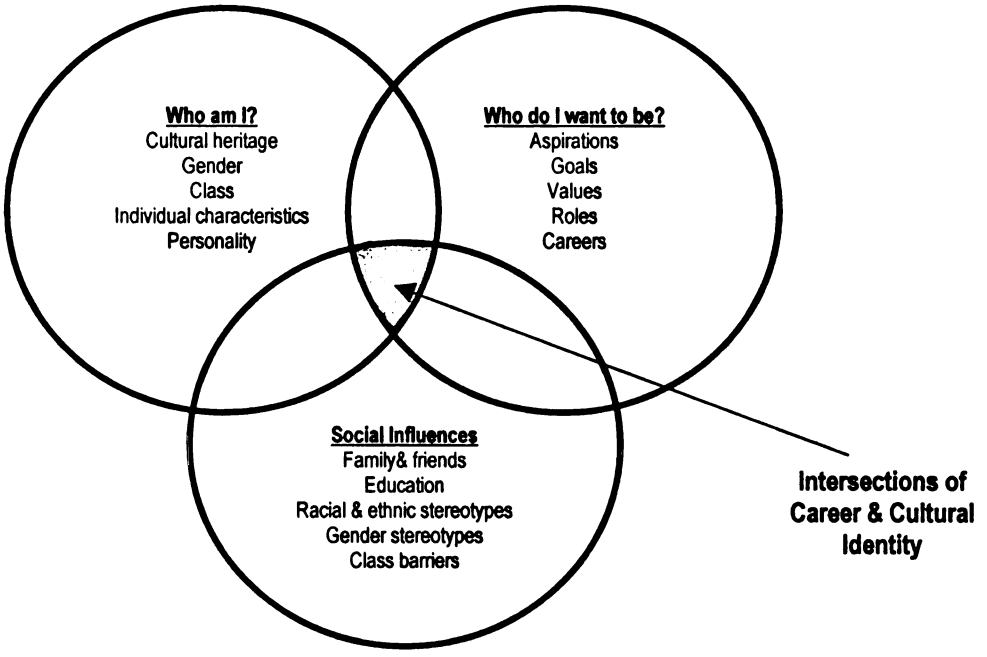
Theoretical Implications

The individual and collective actions of the students in the study suggest a link between establishing a career identity and the individual's belief that they might gain power to move beyond the limitations which arise from the traditional marginalization of Latinos in U.S. society. This presents a perspective contrary to social reproduction theory which suggests that cultural and societal structures are generally immutable (Willis, 1981). The students in the study are actively constructing a career identity which is reflexive not only with their cultural heritage, but also establishes norms and behaviors quite different from those of previous generations. The production of norms and behaviors point to a self determined path that may lead beyond limitations of class and race currently interwoven in our social structures. I believe that this process is largely interpretive. The students' career decisions are derived from their perceptions of and responses to social structures. It is in interpreting society, that the student adopts a vision of success which in turn propels him/her into new organizational and cultural contexts. There again, interpretations of professionalism and responsibility guide him/her just as they do others who are following a similar path. The students in the study are engaged, as Willis (1981) suggests, in mediating structural conditions through awareness of their culture and societal position. This is where prevailing career theory falls short. In order to develop a more robust framework of career theory, we must consider the interpretive nature of the individual's understanding of their world, through the lens of culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and social structures. As individuals' perceptions of the world differ and change over time, so may the individual's perception of self, opportunity, and career. This illustrates the multidimensional

nature of identity and career development theory as posited by Vondracek (1992). The gaps in career theory are as wide as the variance of social structures that effect people in our society.

The Mexican American business students' experiences in this study provide a perspective on how individuals continue to negotiate relationships with the structures of our society from an interpretive understanding of culture and meaning. Recall the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 4, Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model for Intersections of Career and Cultural Identity



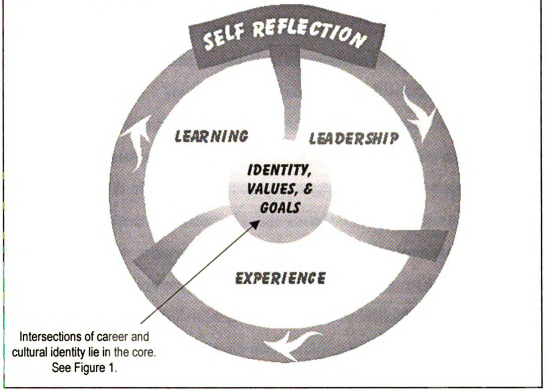
Most career theory has focused on the questions "Who am I?" and "Who do I want to be?" either through personality and interest assessments or stage development theory approaches. The third dimension "Social Influences" is a critical mediating factor in identity and career development which can serve both enabling and disabling functions depending upon the individual's sense of self arising from the first two dimensions. It is the interplay between all three dimensions which best explores individual identity and career development.

The role of technology and the rapid changes evident in this information age pose some significant shifts in how individuals conceive of careers and occupations. Occupational lines and career roles are less distinct than they were in the 1970s and 1980s giving rise to the concept of boundary-less careers. Studies that examine the interplay of contemporary psychological and social influences with regard to career development and identity are especially needed in order to facilitate more effective learning experiences in higher education. Additional inquiries on Latino and other minority student populations using Bandura's concept of self-efficacy as a construct may be especially helpful to critically examine the influences of social barriers which have historically limited access to professional careers.

The study also provided evidence that mastery experiences, such as internships, enhance self-efficacy and the potential for career success. Employers tend to look for three key elements in evaluating prospective employees: 1) the capacity for learning generally measured through an individual's educational attainment; 2) experience relative to their intended job function and general problem-solving as is evident from the rise of behavioral based interviews and pre-employment activities; 3) leadership generally evaluated by an individual's initiative and achievements in extracurricular involvement in organizations, campus and community activities. Consider these elements through the lens of current career theory. Super gives us the concept of "career maturity" discussed in Chapter Two. Career maturity refers to the level at which students accomplish developmental career tasks, formulate career plans, and understand the parameters of their chosen career (Super, 1957). Career maturity is vitally dependent on experiential learning and mastery through self-reflection. As evident from the study, students involved in professional

organizations and internships gained greater confidence, career certainty, and maturity through these developmental experiences during their college years. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy through mastery experiences is equally important in understanding the student's career development process as it provides a critical theoretical foundation to the elements of experience and self-reflective learning. If we consider the saliency of mastery experiences in the study along the lines of learning, experience and leadership, a clear model emerges (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Conceptual Model of Engaged Career Learning



Imagine the core of this model to be the essential elements of the self (identity, values, and goals) as delineated in the Conceptual Model of Intersections of Career and Cultural Identity (Figure 1). Surrounding the core are the three elements of mastery critical to career development and workplace success: the capacity for continuous learning, work and life experiences leading to maturity,

and leadership which relates directly to individual initiative. The model is bounded by a circle of continuous self-reflection which powers the individual's on-going development. The significance of the model is that it provides a framework for understanding a complex and multidimensional development process. The importance of such a framework is echoed in Olga's reflection of her mastery experiences in college, "...you get all this knowledge. You know, you read, you learn, and take tests but it doesn't mean anything. If you have a framework, you can correlate things." A dynamic career development process requires a model in which you can see how the pieces fit together even if they are continuously changing.

Pragmatic Implications and Theory

This study also has some practical implications for educators and career services professionals. The findings of study support the idea that peer associations which combine both career and cultural activities foster both individual and collective efficacy. This suggests that educators may be able to facilitate the growth of collective efficacy through advising and support of student organizations. Collective efficacy through career-oriented peer associations is especially salient for groups who have limited co-ethnic role models in college or in their intended profession. Further studies on the affects of professional peer associations, career experiences and internships on minority student success in fields such as business, engineering and medicine would be particularly interesting.

There are a number of pragmatic implications for working with first-generation college students which arose from the study. As parents of first-generation and/or low-income college students may not have a clear understanding of their student's career options, parent orientation programs may be particularly helpful in enhancing parents' understanding of student

experiences. Further, first-generation college students in the study tended to have a limited understanding of career options available to them, and the work entailed with given majors. This suggests that it may be very important for first-generation and/or low-income students to participate in experiential learning opportunities, such as internships, professional conferences, or site-visits, to explore their career choices. Evidence in the study suggested that student mastery of career-related experiences served to enhance student success in their career field and increase academic interest in their major. Additionally, understanding the conceptual models of the Intersection of Career and Cultural Identity (Figure 1) and Engaged Career Learning (Figure 2) can help practitioners in providing a framework for students to understand the dynamic components of their career development process within the context of their social worlds.

Suggestions for Research

The review of literature in Chapter 2 clearly identifies the scarcity of studies on Latino career development, so that more is certainly needed. I would like to make a few suggestions for researchers based on my experience in this study. First, in designing cultural studies, we should carefully attend to how cultural communities are defined and who is defining them. Although this study focused on the experiences of Mexican American students, more than half of the students who participated in the study asked specifically why their peers from other Latino backgrounds were not included in the study. Latino business students who participated in the study tended to define their community pan-ethnically, perhaps due to their marked under-representation at Michigan State University. Padilla's (1985) suggestion that "the decision of Spanish speaking groups about when to construct an inclusive or collective group identity and come to share a consciousness-of-kind as 'Latinos' is based on the groups'

assessment of their goals and their options" (p. 64). Future studies should consider community standards in defining cultural identity groups and how ethnic consciousness may vary in expression in different regions throughout the U.S.

I also suggest a reframing of cultural studies to look at the process of cultural change as a growth process, rather than one of cultural erosion. How cultures change over time is a fascinating in the processes we use to make sense of our world. Contemporary studies which probe individual belief systems related to culture and change may yield a greater understanding of our capacity for social survival and human development.

Second, I suggest additional studies are needed that address the interplay of social influences on identity and career development, particularly for multicultural populations and women. Researchers must also endeavor to rethink career development theory in light of these overlooked populations and the changing landscape of the world of work.

Conclusions

Geertz writes that culture is the webs of meaning that man, himself has spun. People create cultural systems. Social structures, such as family, peer and professional associations, gender roles, class barriers and schools impact our sense of identity as we see ourselves in relation to other human beings. Our identity is also influenced by our vision of the future and our conception of the individual we would like to become. Visions of the future also impact our conception of the world we would like to live in and the quality of life we would choose for our families, our communities and ourselves. Often these visions stimulate change as borders are crossed, requiring a redefinition of what it means to be a member of a cultural group or a member of a profession. Individuals who cross social borders, particularly those who have been traditionally marginalized, create new meanings for themselves as they pioneer

into new realities. The cumulative effect, I believe, is as Geertz suggests, that people weave new social and cultural meanings integrating threads from their past, their present, and their hopes for the future.

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APPENDIX I:

Statement for Informed Consent

What is the study about?
This study explores the relationship between cultural identity and career identity of Mexican American college students majoring in business. The research consists of individual personal interviews with approximately 20 students that include questions about career choices and goals, family, college experiences, and cultural communities. After the individual interviews have been conducted and analyzed, small groups of students (five to six students) will be asked to participate in focus group discussions about themes and issues which emerged from the individual interviews. The intent of the research is to provide a forum for college students to candidly share their thoughts and experiences relating to career aspirations and cultural values so that educators might learn better ways to support student success.

What is my role as a participant?
As a participant, you are the most important contributor to the study. Your time and your candid responses are all that are necessary. Your decision to participate in the study is completely up to you. You may choose not to participate at all. You may choose not to participate in an interview or focus group. You can refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer and, you may decide to discontinue your participation at any time, for any reason.

How much of my time will participating in this study take?
As a participant in this study you may be asked to participate in an individual interview (90 to 120 minutes) and/or a follow up focus group (90 to 120 minutes). Your time for one or both of these activities will not exceed four hours.

What about the results of the study?
All results (interviews and focus groups) will be kept strictly confidential and participants will remain anonymous in any report of the research findings. A copy of the official report of findings will be made available upon its completion.

What if I have any questions or concerns about the study?
If you have questions or concerns about the study, the researcher or anything related to your participation you may contact either individual listed below:

Linda Gross
Researcher/Doctoral Candidate
355-9510 x167 office
487-3427 home
grossl@pilot.msu.edu

Dr. Robert Rhoads
Faculty Supervisor
Department of Educational Administration
355-5979
rrhoads@pilot.msu.edu

APPENDIX II:

Consent form and demographic information sheet

Thank you for agreeing to be part of my dissertation study. I value your willingness to participate and the time you are volunteering. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about your participation. I look forward to working with you.

Please complete the following information form so we can begin!

INFORMED CONSENT

I have read the researcher's statement regarding my voluntary role in the study. I agree to participate voluntarily. I understand that I may choose not to participate in any portion of the study at any time.

Signature _____ Date_____

Address _____
number and street city state zip

Phone _____ E-mail _____

The following information is for demographic purposes. It will be kept strictly confidential.

A. Name _____ B. Age _____

C. Gender _____ D. Ethnic background _____

E. Year in college _____ F. Expected graduation date _____

G. Major(s)_____ H. Cumulative grade point average _____

I. Where were you born? _____

J. Home State(s) _____

L. Languages spoken: Native or first language _____

Other languages _____

K. Please attach a copy of your resume, if you have one.

Interviews

An interview time will be set up at your convenience. Weekend and evening times are available. What day(s) and time(s) are most convenient for you to participate in an interview?

Please return this form in the enclosed, return addressed, stamped envelope or drop off to Linda Gross in 419 Eppley Center.

APPENDIX III:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. REVIEW DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SHEET

A. Verify the subject's understanding of informed consent.
B. Verify information and check for thoroughness.
C. Ask subject to comment on or correct any blank or inaccurate items.

II. CULTURE AND FAMILY. Let's start by talking about your background.

A. On your information sheet, you said your ethnic background was _____. What does it mean to be_____ ?

B. What does cultural identity mean to you?
What cultural groups, if any, do you consider yourself part of?
Are there any groups associated with your ethnic background that you do not identify with or don't want to be part of? Why?

C. You indicated that you speak _____ on your information sheet. Probes:

If bilingual:

1a. In what contexts do you prefer to speak Spanish/English?

1b. Which language do you speak more of on a day to day basis? At home? At college?

1c. What does it mean to you to be bilingual?

If not bilingual:

2a. Are any of your family members bilingual?

2b. When/where do they speak Spanish /English?

2c. How important is it for a person to be bilingual in your community?

D. How many generations of your family have lived in the United States? Tell me about your family.

Researcher worksheet:

Individual	Age	Occupation	Schooling

E. How would you describe the community your family lives in?
What was it like growing up there?
What is it like now?
What does it mean to you to come from this community?

F. How would you describe your family's financial status when you were growing up?
Has it changed now?
What would you estimate your family's income during the last few years?

G. What kinds of expectations do your parents and family have for you?
Were you always expected to go to college?
Were there certain careers they wanted you to pursue?

III. ASPIRATIONS

A. Let's map out what your career interests have been.
What was the first thing you ever remembered wanting to be? Why?
What other occupations were you interested in while you were growing up?
What interested you in them?
Why did you decide to pursue or not to pursue them?

B. What led you to decide on business?

C. What do you think it takes to become a success in the field of business?

D. How do your friends and family feel about your decision to major in business?
Have they been supportive? How?

E. What does it mean to you to be a successful Latino/a in business?

F. What are your impressions of corporate America?
How would you describe the current business world?

G. Do you think there are barriers to Latino/a success in business or corporate America?
If yes, describe them.
Do you think these barriers will affect you in achieving your success? Why or why not?

IV. COLLEGE EXPERIENCES

A. Tell me about your decision to go to college.
When did you first consider college as an option?
What were you looking for in a college?
What/who influenced your decision?
What schools did you consider? Why ? How did you decide on Michigan State?

B. What expectations did/do you have for your college career?

C. How did you feel when you first came to campus?
What have been the greatest challenges for you in college?
How do you handle these challenges?

D. What activities are you involved in? Which are most important to you?

E. Did you feel it was important to get involved with the Latino community on campus? Why or why not?

F. MSU offers a variety of minority student support programs on campus?
Have you used any of these programs? Why or why not?
If yes, have they been helpful for you? How?

G. What kinds of support are most important to you in college?

H. What does it mean to you to be a successful Latino/a college student?

I. Do you think their are barriers to Latino/a student success in college? If yes, what are they? Do you think these will affect you? If yes, how?

J. Have relationships changed with friends from home since you have been in college? If so, how?

K. Let's review your resume. Tell me about the kinds of work experiences you have had.
Did you ever encounter a barrier in a job you've held? If yes, how did you handle it?

L. Have you held a business related internship? If so, when & where?
How did you get the position?
Did it help you clarify your career goals in business? Why or why not?
What were the most significant things you learned during your internship?

M. What do you want to accomplish by the time you graduate?
What about 5 years from now? What are your most important long term goals?

V. PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD

A. What are the most significant issues currently facing the Latino community?
What does this mean to you? How do these issues affect you?
What is your role in dealing with or addressing these issues?

B. What business publications do you read to stay current on business issues?
Which publications are the most important to you? Why?
Have you ever read Hispanic Business?

C. What organizations can you see yourself being involved in once you are out in the business world? (business professional societies/organizations, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, National Hispanic Business Association, civic organizations, company based Latino groups, fraternity/sorority networks, alumni groups)
How important would being involved in a community or professional organization be to you?

D. There are lots of issues concerning Latino communities in business. (NAFTA, emerging markets and industrialization in Mexico, South and Central America)
Do you talk about any of these issues in classes? With family? Friends? Others?

E. Who are your business role models? What do they mean to you? Are there any Latinos you regard as business role models?

APPENDIX IV:

Variable Relationships in the Interview Protocol

VARIABLE TO BE EXPLORED	PROTOCOL QUESTION
Descriptive demographic information (such as age, gender, ethnicity, year in school, major, nationality, etc.)	Information sheet & I: A-C II: D -F
Cultural identity	Information sheet: D, L II: A-E III: E, G IV: C - J V: A - E
Career aspirations	Information sheet: G II: G III: A - C, E -G IV: A - B, H - M V: C, E
Family influences	II: B - G III: A, D IV: A, J V: D, E
Peer associations & influences	II: B - C III: A, D IV: A - G; J V: A - E
Involvement with ethnic communities, issues and organizations	II: A - E III: E - G IV: D - I; K - L V: A - E
College and work experiences	II: G IV: A - L
Perceptions of barriers	II: F III: C - G IV: C, I-J V: A, D-E
Self efficacy	III: A - G IV: A - M V: A - E

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