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Disrupting the Deficit with Latinx Cultural Wealth: Creciendo en la Excelencia

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Reconocimientos

Le dedico todo estos trabajos, esfuerzos, y logros en mi carrera a mi mamá, Lucia Pineda.

Muchísimas gracias, mamá. Con todo tu apoyo, tu amor, y tu ejemplo, yo he podido lograr todo lo que

he querido en estos últimos años. Quiero agradecer y reconocer todo los esfuerzos y sacrificios que has

hecho por darnos una mejor vida a mis hermanos y a mi. Creciendo, nos tuviste mucha paciencia y nos

enseñaste a luchar por la educación que nos ha sacado adelante.

Hoy, he podido estudiar lo que más me motiva en esta vida y he podido graduarme con mi

maestría. Aunque los años fueron difíciles, y cada rato era llorar, tu nunca dejaste de echarme ánimo y

recordarme que si se podía. Hubo días que no sabía si en verdad si pudiera acabar la escuela o si pudiera

sobresalir en esta profesión, pero tu nunca lo dudabas, y por ese apoyo te lo dedico todo.

Siempre cargaré todos mis logros y mis sueños en alto por ti. Espero que sepas que este

momento es una gran bendición no nada más para mi, pero para ti también. Gracias, mamá. ¡Lo hicimos!

Abstract

By applying concepts of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2006) and an asset-based framework (Johnson and Bozeman, 2012), this action research project identified the different types of capital Latinx individuals hold and how their cultural wealth should inform the next steps of institutional practices. This study focused on Latinx students and graduated working professions in the greater San Diego area. Individuals were asked to identify and share their varying capital and how it has influenced their holistic success in navigating academia. Data emphasized what skills and realities fuel Latinx cultural resilience, as well as suggested initiatives to build on Latinx students' navigational excellence. The overall outcomes of this study emphasized the need to understand the intersections of cultural capital and holistic success of Latinx students and highlighted avenues necessary to disrupt deficit-oriented thinking in an effort to drive change in higher education for the support needed by Latinx students in San Diego.

Growth of the Hispanic and Latinx Community

In 2019, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities reported only 19.5 percent of the total number of undergraduate students were Hispanic and Latinx undergraduates. While Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) play a significant role in increasing educational access and success for the Hispanic and Latinx community, the graduation rate of Latinx students at four-year institutions is still 12% lower when compared to the graduation rates of White non-Hispanic students in the United States (Latino College Completion, 2020). The start of 2020 also brought forth the COVID-19 Global Pandemic that continued to greatly impact the Latinx population. The University of California, Los Angeles' Latino Policy and Politics Initiative of 2021 reported that 11.3 percent of multiethnic students, almost 11 percent of Latino students and 10 percent of Black students canceled their postsecondary education plans for the fall of 2021, compared to only 6.4 percent of the total student population (Carrasco, 2022).

The Latinx population is expected to exponentially grow within the next few years, meaning all institutions should expect a higher enrollment of Latinx students.

Terminology

In order to better understand this study, I would like to mention that I have provided a few relevant definitions of key terms used throughout findings in the Glossary located in Appendix A. Additional term definitions and context will be provided throughout the literature review section of this action research paper as well.

This action research identifies members of the Latinx community as those whose roots stem from Latin America. When the term "Latinx" is used, it refers to the gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina.

Capitalizing on Cultural Resilience

Institutions must acknowledge, and end, their deficit views of Latinx students. These deficit views are often not recognized by higher education administrators and lead to not building on the

lessons and skills acquired through Latinx experiences. Pulling from Johnson and Bozeman's (2012) research, those who have learned how to integrate and view their experiences as assets have been the most culturally resilient and are most prepared to achieve overall excellence. Additional research from Carales and López (2020) suggests the way higher education counters deficit perspectives of Latinx communities is by acknowledging what Latinx students value and offer, *instead* of identifying what they presumably lack. These deficit views fail to acknowledge the lessons and skills Latinx students' experiences have taught them as they navigate the system for their survival (rather than "success").

The practice of *plática*, the insight of strength-based learning, and Yosso's (2006) community cultural wealth model can be used to identify the strengths and assets Latinx students bring to the university setting. If educators and administrators are not *embracing* the realities and acquired skills of Latinx students, while also *building off them*, how can we expect these students to reach their full potential in the system of higher education? I argue that while Latinx academic and holistic success is suffering due to many factors, Latinx success has not been fully supported by higher education because institutions fail to recognize, celebrate, and capitalize on the cultural wealth of Latinx students.

Background and Context of Action Research

According to the 2021 U.S. Census, San Diego County's population is made up of about 30.3% Latinx (and Hispanic) constituents. California's population is also currently made up of 39.4% Hispanic and Latinx individuals. Because of San Diego's dense Latinx population, this study's population focused on individuals who attend, or attended, an accredited 4-year institution and are now undergraduates, current graduate students, or graduated working professionals in the greater San Diego area.

By using an asset-based framework, the constructivist lens of the Four-Stage Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984), and the concept of plática, the aim of this work was to draw from Latinx individuals with varying socioeconomic and generational statuses to identify the additional long-term capital needed for Latinx students to successfully navigate academia.

Literature Review

The conceptual framework of this literature review connected Yosso's (2006) community cultural

wealth model and Johnson and Bozeman's (2012) asset bundle model as they unfold in plática.

This action research is centered on the brilliance of the Latinx community and the

deficit-oriented thinking higher education administrators and educators tend to have of said Latinx

communities. In identifying cultural capital of Latinx students, literature highlighted the need to

recognize the intersections of Latinx cultural wealth, cultural resilience, and developed excellence when

navigating postsecondary institutions. The term "Latinx" has been acknowledged as new terminology;

therefore, terms such as "Latino", "Chicano" and "Mexican" were also used to widen the literature

search.

Defining the Latinx Community

Salina and Lozano (2017) analyzed the term *Latinx* which is used as the gender-neutral label for

Latino/a. The use of the term *Latinx* challenges ideologies of language, culture, and gender, and is a way

to recognize the importance of the intersectionality of social identities. In their research, Salina and

Lozano (2017) found *Latino* has traditionally referred to both males and females, and after adapted by

the United States, also used to label individuals who identify as *mestizo* or *mulatto people* (those whose

race is a mix of White with Black and Native races) of Central or South America. Now, *Latino* refers to

people from the Caribbean, Mexico, and those from the countries of Central and South America,

including countries that are not Spanish-speaking. *Hispanic* refers to people who are from countries

where the primary language is Spanish. Salina and Lozano (2017) emphasized that while these

pan-ethnic terms differ, the key similarity is that both refer to a cultural and ethnic group, not a race.

Gallardo (2014) further analyzed the political and cultural presence of the Mexican-American

community and analyzed the introduction of the term *Chicano*. In efforts to revitalize and renew the

sense of hope and pride of Mexican history in the United States, *Chicana/o* refers to all people of

Mexican descent born in the United States. Similar to the term Latinx, the term Chicanx continues to slowly emerge in hope of recognizing intersectionality, and disrupting the idea of inclusivity within traditional Mexican and Mexican-American communities.

In understanding the differences of pan-ethnic terms and choosing to continue efforts of inclusivity, the term *Latinx* will be used in this study to encompass all defined pan-ethnic terms. This term is used in order to be gender inclusive when referring to individuals of Latin American descent.

Cultural Wealth and Cultural Resilience

Yosso's (2006) community cultural wealth model examined six forms of cultural capital that students of color bring to college from an appreciative standpoint: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital. These different types of capital are developed throughout students' lived realities and shape an individual's cultural wealth. Yosso's (2006) model has been used to explore the talents, strengths, and experiences students of color, in this case Latinx students, bring with them to their college environment.

Building off the concept of cultural wealth, Clauss-Ehlers (2004) depicted cultural resilience to refer to the way an individual's cultural background, supporters, values, and environment experiences help navigate and overcome adversity. Clauss-Ehlers (2004) emphasized the need to critically explore resilience from a sociocultural perspective, and move away from the traditional definition of resilience as a conglomeration of character traits.

Deficit Perceptions and Cultural Wealth

Carales and López (2020) described deficit-oriented thinking in higher education to be the negative perceptions, assumptions, generalizations and beliefs held by some faculty, staff, and administrators towards marginalized communities. According to the authors, the belief that minoritized students lack certain qualities necessary to achieve in higher education places blame on the individual and does not hold institutions accountable. Carales and López (2020) emphasized the way we counter

deficit perspectives of Latinx communities is by acknowledging students' values instead of identifying what they presumably lack. Within this article, Rendón (2014) was also referenced to identify four additional forms of *ventajas* specific to Latinx student success: *ganas*/determination, ethic consciousness, spirituality/faith, and pluriversal cultural wealth.

Excelencia for Latinx and Cultural Resilience

Dr. Juan Carlos Arauz (2012), executive director of E3: *Education, Equity, & Excellence*, leads an organization dedicated to understanding and acting on three main questions: (1) What is educational excellence?, (2) How does equity affect education?, and (3) What does educational excellence look like in a global society? In assessing these questions, Arauz's (2012) analysis emphasized the need to redefine educational excellence by first accepting and acknowledging issues with the traditional ways of both interpreting and reaching educational excellence. Arauz (2012) noted that the US currently has an educational achievement gap influenced by differences of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic, and other factors. This means all students are starting on different levels, with some holding more privileges, opportunities, and support than others. Additionally, being "smart" is no longer defined as memorization of mere content knowledge. Instead, educational excellence is now being defined by how individuals navigate, interpret, and incorporate content knowledge. This focused on the need for higher education administrators and educators to acknowledge excellence of Latinx students in the form of their lived experiences and the skills they have acquired. Arauz (2012) highlighted strategies to translate the strengths of students' lived experience to the new definition of educational excellence. The new approach valued all student competencies and skills required to navigate a new world and a new way of thinking. Those who have learned how to integrate content knowledge and to view their realities as assets have been the most culturally resilient and most prepared for overall *excellencia*.

Overview of the Asset Bundle Model

Johnson and Bozeman (2012) pointed out the need to specifically diversify the scientific pipeline using the asset bundle model to support and advance minoritized students' careers. The article suggested minoritized students who navigate institutions while holding multiple social identities become more vulnerable to social identity contingencies that increase attrition —such as stereotype threat, impostor syndrome, microaggressions which are direct responses to the systemic racism, oppression and macroaggressions within institutions. That said, areas where students need additional support are defined as "asset bundles" (p. 1488) which are specific sets of abilities and resources individuals develop that help them succeed in educational and professional tasks. The five asset bundles relevant to educational retention and achievement are: educational endowments, science socialization, network development, family expectations, and material resources. Johnson and Bozeman (2012) stated that by acknowledging the way in which social identities shape students' experiences and development of assets, the asset bundle model has potential to help advance minority students and their transition to college.

Identities and Capital

Hurtado et al. (2020) also suggested as students' asset bundles develop, their insecurities and disadvantages stemming from status differences based on social identity diminish. This means when an institution acknowledges and provides support for the experiences brought by their Latinx students, it cultivates an enriching environment in which students can thrive. Hurtado's et al. (2020) research challenged institutions to acknowledge Latinx student assets by providing a deeper understanding of the effects of familial and social capital on network development for students. While all forms of support for college-readiness were appreciated by students, Latinx students' decisions had much more to do with the weight of familial influences. In terms of network development, Latinx students were most influenced by familial and social capital. This was further supported by findings in this study. Latinx

students claimed friends and family as being the primary reason for enrolling and pursuing specific

institutions over other factors.

The Power of Plática

Similar to the intent of the socratic method, Guajardo and Guajardo (2013) defined *plática* as

inquiry, pedagogy, and a development for community-building. As inquiry, pláticas spawn more pláticas

and invite opportunities to honor community members' stories. As pedagogy, plática becomes pivotal

when it leads to action. Through the dialogue and lesson development in plática, new knowledge is

formed and can therefore influence how a community continues to cultivate. As suggested by the article,

what is learned within plática can lead to reformed curriculum, community growth, and can be used to

redefine how administrators and educators support students in higher education. It is important to note

plática is a cultural practice that is often used for conflict resolution; however, it is used most with the

intention to engage in dialogue, listen, and to learn of issues through different perspectives. That said,

plática itself and the product of plática inform community building and develop a framework that then

continues to structure the next steps in higher education and in the cycles of action research - service,

teaching, and development of a research agenda.

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Rationale and Epistemology

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We know Latinx students bring cultural wealth to the table and not only diversify higher

education, but also strengthen holistic resilience for other Latinx students in the form of representation

and first-hand experience (Salinas, 2017). Literature indicates the cultural capital of Latinx students is not

being recognized and not being used to promote a diverse and supportive environment (Johnson and

Bozeman, 2012). While Latinx students' academic and overall success is suffering due to many factors,

Latinx persistence in higher education is not fully supported because institutions fail to recognize,

understand, and capitalize on the cultural wealth of Latinx students (Arauz, 2012).

While many institutions may be creating initiatives to better support these students, their approach is often fueled by interpreting the lived realities of Latinx students through a deficit mindset (Carales and López, 2020).

To best understand the cultural wealth Latinx students value and hold, Yosso's (2006) Community Cultural Wealth Model, the four components of the Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984) and the Asset Bundle Model (2012) were used to analyze data throughout this action research. The aim of this project was to identify and understand the assets Latinx students bring to an institution by asking present and past Latinx students to articulate the experiences that have made them who they are today.

Four-Staged Experiential Learning Model

The Four-Staged Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984) outlines the learning cycles used to interpret the stories of participants and overall findings of this action research. Below is an overview of the four distinct steps and how they were used to define data:

1. **Concrete Experience** - Comprehensive and concrete experience was accumulated by having Latinx participants complete individual questionnaires and interviews.

2. **Observe and Reflect** - Through empirical work, data revealed the insight and understanding gained from listening to the truths and experiences of Latinx students. Individuals were given a space to engage in plática and articulate their various forms of capital, resulting in an opportunity of engagement and acknowledgement that was identified as helpful by all participants.

3. **Forming Abstract Concepts** - Theories and concepts that further explain the influence of capital on navigation in life and academia were:

   a. The concept of *Plática* as explained by Guajardo and Guajardo (2013)

   b. The concept of familismo as explained by Sabogal et al. (1987) and Calzada et al. (2012)

      c.   The concept of *Ventajas* in Latinx student success in the form of *ganas* as explained by

           Rendón (2014)

      d.   The need to recognize navigation through content knowledge of Latinx realities,

           specifically regarding skills that integrate traditional cultural values along with attributes

           of self-efficacy (Torres L., 2009)

      e.   The Asset-Bundle Model (Johnson and Bozeman, 2012) specifically on the development

           of asset-bundles of network development and family expectations

4. **Testing in New Situations** - After completing each research cycle, data suggested new changes,

    applications, and recommendations to institutions and administrators to build on Latinx cultural

    wealth.
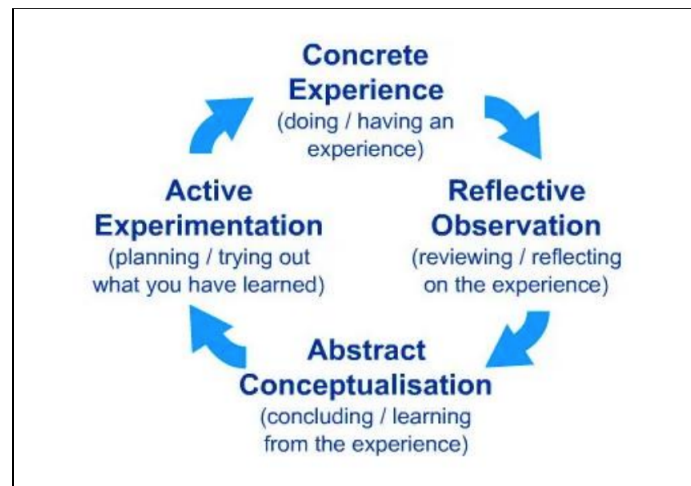
Figure 1. outlines the phases of constructivism research as they pertain to Kolb's (1984) Four-Stage
Experiential Learning Model used in this action research project.

Overview of Research Design and Data Collection

In an effort to gain practical knowledge of Latinx experiences and backgrounds to identify

cultural capital, this research was heavily influenced by the phases of constructive research through

the Four-Stage Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984).

This action research began with an individual pre-assessment questionnaire and followed

with an interview. After conducting individual interviews, data was synthesized into an infographic that identified key findings in the study. The infographic and post-assessment questionnaire were then shared with individual participants to review and complete on their own time. The section below highlights the various cycles and their distinct findings.

Cycle I: Pre-Assessment Questionnaire

Observation and Reflection

The pre-assessment questionnaire (see Appendix B) served as an introduction to the types of capital individuals may hold. Each individual completed an anonymous pre-assessment questionnaire that not only defined the different capital, but also listed different examples of what may embody the main six types of capital explained through Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model (2006). The data accumulated was used to understand and assess how participants identified their capital. Findings also informed how participants articulate their intersections of cultural capital and navigation of higher education **before** engaging in their individual interview. Results were collected and compared to interview and post-assessment data collected **after** all sessions had been completed. The table below outlines some common characteristics of the participants in this study. A visual representation of all the data accumulated through the pre-assessment questionnaire can also be found on the finalized version of the Disrupting the Deficit Infographic located on Appendix F.

Identified as first-generation college students	Currently working on an undergraduate or graduate degree	Working in higher-education	Identified as Latina or Latinx	Identified as Latino or Latinx
12 (All participants)	6	4	6	6

Table 1. outlines demographics and details of participants in this action research study.

Influence of Familial and Social Capital

From the pre-assessment questionnaire, it was identified that 75% of participants had the

support of their mother throughout academics. Participants also reported that 50% had the support

of their father and 92% had the support of their siblings during their academic journey. Continuing to

highlight familial and social capital, participants shared that 0% identified as having a Latinx mentor

during their undergraduate journey. However, 67% of participants did identify having a non-Latinx

mentor at some point in their academic career.

In conjunction with the Asset-Bundle Model (Johnson and Bozeman, 2012), Hurtado et al. (2020)

suggested as students' asset bundles develop, their insecurities and disadvantages stemming from status

differences based on social identity diminish. He also challenged institutions to acknowledge Latinx

student assets by providing a deeper understanding of the effects of familial and social capital on

network development. While all forms of support for college-readiness were appreciated, Latinx

students' decisions had much more to do with the weight of familial influences. In terms of network

development, Latinx students were most influenced by familial and social capital. While participants

shared that if they "had someone that looked and came from where [they] did", it would have been that

much easier to ask for help in navigating a system such as higher education. This meant that while no

participant was able to make a connection with a mentor based on shared Latinx culture, some were

able to build rapport and find mentors based on other factors such as Greek life, sports, and on-campus

jobs.

That said, this action research identified the heaviest influence of familial capital in the form of

sibling support. There is importance behind acknowledging the familial ties within Latinx culture and

celebrating the idea that when a Latinx student attends university, the entire family is also attending

university. While some of this pertains to family expectations and identified obstacles of first-generation

college students, a lot of this, as mentioned by multiple participants, is also relating to the idea that "we

all go through it together". Multiple siblings attending post-secondary institutions at the same time

mean there are struggles being shared along the way. Familial support is immense, and when higher

education administrators can streamline a process for a student, they could very well be setting up the next sibling who is gearing up to attend college. While Latinx families come in all shapes and sizes, the projected size for a Latinx family in the US has an average family size of more than four people (USA Facts, 2021). As the eldest sibling attends college and learns to navigate a new system, the worries based on social identity can diminish for the following sibling to attend. Recognizing the support of siblings and understanding that some of them may be next to send in college applications is crucial for higher education administrators. This provides an opportunity to not only enhance the connections of family programs to a current student's time at their institution, but to also best prepare a prospective student for their institution.

Navigation Through Connections

It was learned that the top three ways participants best navigated their academic journey were by (1) joining clubs and/or organizations on campus, (2) using resources offered by their institutions, and (3) working an on-campus job. Arguably, the first two ways have continuously been identified as student's top approaches when navigating higher education by varying literature and research.

That said, working an on-campus job is slowly becoming one of the successful ways for a student to not only maneuver academia, but to also provide some sort of income during their college career. It was reported that in 2018, 45 percent of full-time Latinx undergraduates were simultaneously employed (Hussar, B. et. al, 2020, 1-5). Arauz (2012) and Rendón (2014) both elaborate on the concept of navigation through content knowledge and how this has increased the holistic success of Latinx individuals. Rendón (2014) highlights the importance of ganas in the Latinx community that translates to determination and hard work. The transferable skills acquired through holding a job, balancing academia, and navigating new ongoing experiences is what makes individuals so prepared for facing adversity. Arauz (2012) mentions that educational excellence is now being

defined by how individuals navigate, interpret, and incorporate content knowledge. He explains that a new approach to define educational and holistic excellence should value all student competencies and skills required to navigate a new world and a new way of thinking. Those who have learned how to integrate content knowledge and to view their realities as assets have been the most culturally resilient and most prepared for overall *excellencia* (Arauz, 2012).

Changes and Applications

The responses to the pre-assessment questionnaire shed light on familial and social capital that had not been very present within literature. If there were more opportunities for students to identify some of the reasons they feel supported during their academic journey, institutional practices would best adjust to continue supporting Latinx students the way they need it best. This means that, from this research alone, asking students to identify how many siblings they have and if there are any in, or awaiting the start, post-secondary education it can additionally fuel family programs at the institution. There is a lot of love and support within Latinx family dynamics, the ability to recognize it and build off it is what higher education leadership fails to do.

These responses also shed light on enhancing support of individuals through representation. Once again, there is a need for institutions to reassess who they hire and what positions they are hiring them for. Are administrators integrating diverse language and specifically defining the diverse populations being served within hiring cards for applicants to acknowledge and prepare to work in a space that serves diverse backgrounds?

Similarly, a missed opportunity at institutions can be how employers on campus manage student workers. It is no secret that the Latinx culture comes with being a hard-worker and that means providing for yourself and/or helping to provide for others while also finishing school. These students are finding ways to navigate their institution and balance other necessities on the side. Are these student workers supported as both employees and students, or are they only clocking in and

out with no one acknowledging the various roles and responsibilities they are balancing?

Reassessment of how practices of diversity, equity, and inclusion should also be integrated in all areas

that reach individuals and students. If students are engaging in an on-campus job, this means there is

an opportunity for growth and support that is emerging and should be observed.

Cycle II: La Plática - Individual Interviews

Observation and Reflection

After completing the pre-assessment, each participant was scheduled for a 45-minute

individual interview. During the interview, participants were asked questions from the Individual

Interview Script (see Appendix C) and encouraged to share their interpretation of the capital they

hold that has made them so resilient. The plática was observed and transcribed, then coded for data.

Any follow-up and clarifying questions were asked if necessary; however, the conversation for almost

every participant flowed organically and evolved into a storytelling opportunity.

The purpose of using *plática* was to allow participants to tell their stories and lived realities

that are not reflected nor honored within higher education. This data prompts the belief that

administration, staff, and faculty are unable to provide a space where students can vent, share, and

actively be listened to as their stories inform system initiatives based on Latinx cultural wealth.

Fuel Behind the Capital. Rather than focus on the six different types of capital that Yosso

(2006) generalizes on various cultures, this study identified the Latinx cultural wealth to best be

described by much more specific types of capital. From the interviews, it was clear that a majority of

the driving factors helping navigate higher education, while identifying intersections of Latin capital,

were associated with one of the five categories:

1. La Raza
2. Buscando la Excelencia
3. Orgullo a la Familia
4. La Verguenza
5. La Cultura

La Raza. The first category, La Raza, is explained by participants who shared their ability to find comfort and support in those that primarily "looked like [them]" and "came from where [they] came from". This concept was also best supported by Clauss-Ehlers' (2004) depiction of cultural resilience to refer to the way an individual's cultural background, supporters, values, and environment experiences help navigate and overcome adversity. Having la raza to share realities and struggles with was mentioned all throughout interviews as being one of the leading navigational factors. This also emphasizes the data reflected in the pre-assessment that recognized familial support, specifically sibling support, to help through their academic experiences.

This also raises questions on how representation may have affected these outcomes had participants shared their correlation between having a mentor and connecting them to the Latinx community. Representation has constantly been an issue within higher education, whether that means a lack of representation in the form of leadership, staff, and/or faculty of color. This reiterated the need for institutions to expand on the diverse staff they bring to diverse student bodies is vital, especially as more and more Latinx students are projected to attend a 4-year institution.

Yosso's (2006) Cultural Wealth Model specifically taps on the influence social capital can have on an individual's development. Moreso, when the social capital shares common interest and race, gender, ethnicity, it provides opportunities for so much more to be explored. Tying in Hurtado et al. (2020) once again to support the idea that as students' social networks develop, their insecurities and disadvantages stemming from status differences based on social identity diminish. This asset bundle is one that should be recognized as an opportunity to enhance efforts when supporting students. Possibilities such as including diverse student panels at onboarding events or simply acknowledging the Latinx community's presence in day-to-day activities can be forms of enhancing the Latinx experience. When students know they are being seen and they are not the only ones having to endure a system not built for their retention, there is hope in the form of community.

Buscando la Excelencia. Buscando la excelencia identifies the idea that, like many,

participants found the drive to navigate higher education because parents and/or family members

"had high expectations of [them] to do whatever [they] set [their] mind to do". Similarly, reasons like

"my mom liked to say I didn't cross the border then, for you to have a regular job" are more and more

likely to be main motivators in a student's academic journey. This section in particular becomes tricky

to navigate given two differing concepts that emerge from the Latinx community. One idea,

introduced by Rendón (2014), is that the Latinx community has an advantage, a ventaja, in the form

of ganas or determination. Ganas is what characterizes the drive and want to succeed by many Latinx

individuals in today's society. It ties with the concepts of aspirational capital that often thrives so

much on achieving the American dream so many immigrants and descendants of immigrants yearn to

obtain. This concept is also further explained in conjunction with the need to bring orgullo a la

familia.

However while the beauty of endless love and support lies behind familial capital, buscar la

excelencia also shines a light to the additional stress and high expectations unfairly placed on

individuals already navigating a system not built for their success. That said, the second concept to

conceptualize buscando la excelencia for Latinx students falls under familismo or familism. Familismo

is a cultural value seen in Latinx cultures, where high emphasis is placed on the family unit in terms of

respect, support, obligation, and reference (Valdivieso-Mora et al., 2016). Families use their

migration to the United States and their endless sacrifices as reasons for why their student should

excel in every way possible. This obligation is stressful and often causes more harm than support as

addressed in additional literature. While familismo should prompt conversations within families to

recognize generational and academic gaps that may add stressors to a students navigation of

academia, institutions should also be aware and anticipate the stress this can have on Latinx students,

specifically first-generation Latinx students. Familismo highlights the importance familial influence

has on the development of a student. Offering opportunities for families to be much more involved

and more educated on how to best support their students is a missed opportunity when not catering

to Latinx communities. Institutions need to help alleviate some of the stress Latinx culture places on

these students by acknowledging that this is a driving force in how they have successfully made it to

the institution. Administrators must recognize that instead of alienating families from their students'

academic journey, they should be offering opportunities for families to educate themselves and

continue to also build an enriching foundation for students to thrive on.

  Orgullo a la Familia. To bring orgullo a la familia was something that was truly touched upon in

almost every single interview. Participants shared that they "aspire to have a career where [they are]

able to make [their] parents proud", and where they also "hope to get a high paying job to provide for

[themselves] and build a strong foundation for a family". Participants also emphasized their "want to

bring honor to [their] family" and eventually "want to someday, hopefully, give back to [their] parents".

All of this to say that the aspirational capital ties into familial capital so much more for Latinx cultures.

The hope to someday give back and make families proud is also a product of obligation due to familismo.

And while again, chasing the "American dream" and the concept of assimilation do play an underlying

role in these instances, the reality is that, to Latinx students, success does not only mean graduating

college with flying colors. Success to Latinx students also means achieving all that is necessary to give

back to those that recognized their potential and supported them from the very start.

  To continue elaborating, Dr. Arauz (2012) emphasized the idea that being "smart" or "successful"

no longer was defined by content knowledge. Rather, being successful was now based on the ability for

individuals to integrate what they have learned with their navigation through adversity. However, for this

population of participants and for a large portion of the Latinx population, success also means the ability

to bring honor to the family name and provide for the family that supported them throughout their

journeys. Attending their dream school, obtaining their dream job, being able to afford more than

before, all of it would not have been possible without the love and support of social and familial capital

in the eyes of these individuals. This again, emphasizes the need to recognize what drives Latinx

individuals when they begin pursuing their degrees. The long-term capital that motivates the Latinx

community is aspirational capital in the form of financial stability, repaying sacrifices, and overall bringing

honor to the family. For some, it may really be only about obtaining their dream job, but for many more,

the ganas behind navigating higher education comes from making families proud and in some way

ensuring parents that their sacrifices were worth the gamble.

La Vergüenza. Shame, guilt, embarrassment, and yearning for something "more" were all

embodied through the section of La Vergüenza. Quotes that were shared identified moments where

participants were "super embarrassed that [they] didn't listen to the same music that [their] friends did"

or when they were "worried of people making the assumption that [they were] not well educated,

because [they were] speaking spanish". Similarly, participants shared that they were embarrassed during

lunch when they "would bring [their] recycled container with mole, or some authentic Mexican food"

and upon looking at it friends would react in disgust.

The shame or embarrassment described in these scenarios described various conflicts, some of

which collided with concepts of assimilation and others that also conflicted with love for their Latinx

culture. Internal conflicts and negotiation of self play crucial roles as students begin to develop in new

spaces. Latinx individuals grow up integrating as much, or as little, of their culture within their daily

routines that have led them to where they are today. When families mention they want their students to

have the jobs that can give them a better life, there is a sense of deficit-perspectives also arising from

within familial support itself.

This section served as a reminder for participants, researchers, and readers to acknowledge that

where Latinx individuals come from is not something that should bring shame, guilt, or embarrassment.

Wanting a better life for oneself is ganas, and, it is necessary for administrators and Latinx communities

to take a step back and remind themselves how the realities have shaped who they are today regardless of a "better life" or not. Participants, like many, focused on building and moving past their deprived states and into statuses where they could provide much more for themselves, families, and overall careers. While important, if higher education and Latinx individuals do not acknowledge where they are starting from, the battle of self, authenticity, and roots can become overbearing. The goal is not to move beyond what Latinx life for these participants was, rather, the goal is to celebrate where they are coming from and continue to build on their achievements.

In trying to further expand on this particular section, it was difficult to find data that supported these feelings and realizations. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model (2006) is one of the few models that identifies capital of students of color and expands on cultural wealth. And while guilt or shame do not hold the most positive connotations, there is cultural value and meaning behind them for Latinx communities. There is verguenza behind listening to Spanish music and eating traditional cuisine in an un-diverse setting because they are not being recognized as capital that shapes an individual.

La Cultura. La Cultura was defined by quotes such as: "how I was raised made all the difference", "in the Mexican community, you do not stop being part of the family at 18", and "I want for little brown girls to see me someday and know they can do it, they can be happy and work towards the careers they want". This section not only brought the concept of platica and Rendon's (2014) ventajas to life, but it truly identified the ideas of pride. While our verguenza comes from a side of protective behaviors and lack of representation of the capital Latinx individuals hold, there is orgullo in the cultura that shapes who we are.

There is strength in knowing where one comes from and who they are. Recognizing the intersections of Latinx cultural wealth, cultural resilience, and developed excellence when navigating postsecondary institutions as it pertains to la cultura is what Latinx individuals need from leadership and staff in higher education. Johnson and Bozeman (2012) stated that by acknowledging the way in which

social identities shape students' experiences and development of assets, the asset bundle model has

potential to help advance minority students and their transition to college. Opportunities like this action

research, engagement in platica, and acknowledgement of the cultural diversity within student

populations is how institutions can continue to celebrate these students and their cultural wealth. When

institutions celebrate the Latinx community, it allows for them to also celebrate themselves and

recognize their culture matters. How their Latinx experiences and cultural traditions shape them matters.

who they are, matters.

Changes and Applications. The purpose of using *plática* was to allow participants to build

community and overall share their experiences through Latinx culture's ability to storytell. The

additional amount of information gathered from pre-assessment questionnaires to individual

interviews was immense. If higher education administrators, staff, and faculty could take the time to

assess the latinx populations they serve through platica, they would be able to identify what defines

their students so much more. The cultural practice of plática, and the product of plática, inform

community building and develop a framework that then continues to structure the next steps in

higher education and in the cycles of action research - service, teaching, and development of a

research agenda (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013).

The data collected from both pre-assessments and individual interviews truly shifted and

helped populate questions to address in the post-assessment questionnaire. The findings suggested

more investigation of specific forms of capital, feelings towards deficit-mindsets of where they were

coming from, and the need to gather the sense of whether or not participants felt they were offered

institutional support based on their capital.

Cycle III: Data Collection Shift After Comprehensive Understanding

Originally, the outline of the research design aimed to bring participants together to continue

building the Latinx community and share stories with folks who share similar insights and capital. That

said, the COVID-19 pandemic and individual responsibilities did not make it possible for a focus group to take place. The data taken from the individual pláticas and questionnaires in the first cycles were gathered, coded, and interpreted to identify specific themes or common realities among participants that were instead formatted into the Disrupting the Deficit infographic (see Appendix D) to share with participants. This data also influenced new questions that populated the framing of the post-assessment questionnaire (see Appendix E).

Disrupting the Deficit Infographic

Observation and Reflection. The purpose of the Disrupting the Deficit infographic (see Appendix D) was to synthesize data into digestible visuals for participants to review at their own time and keep. This infographic disclosed the cumulative data collected from all anonymous pre-assessment questionnaires and interviews. The aim was to present unbiased data and frame an institutional suggestion of platica to celebrate cultural wealth without a deficit view on Latinx students. Along with this infographic, participants were sent a post-assessment questionnaire to complete that will be further explained next.

Cycle IV: Post-Assessment Questionnaire

Observation and Reflection

The post-assessment questionnaire (see Appendix E) aimed to examine how the experience influenced participants' perspective of their acquired skills and how they navigated higher education. It also aimed to assess their experience of *plática* in this research as a method for inquiry, pedagogy, and a development for community-building. Participants were encouraged to further elaborate on the data displayed on the Disrupting the Deficit infographic (see Appendix D) and empowered to identify motifs of their own.

Data and Concepts. Before continuing, a more detailed review of this data can be seen on the **finalized** version of the Disrupting the Deficit Infographic in Appendix F.

Below are what participants shared when asked if they were surprised by anything they

mentioned, or focused on, during their individual interview:

"Yes, I thought it was surprising how much I focused on financial motivation compared to

others"

"I was just surprised by how a lot of the help I received was through my family"

"I think I was surprised that I honestly could not say exactly what I did to make it through

college. I just did"

"I was surprised I did not recognize other capital"

After reviewing the concept of "deficit-oriented thinking", participants were also asked to define their

understanding of the term. Below are some of the definitions they submitted:

"I would define it as the "No Child Left Behind" action which in my opinion cripples excelling

students and students who can reach that potential. If I would've thought like that, I would

not be where I am today"

"I would define deficit-oriented thinking as a mindset that focuses on the negatives

characteristic or what someone or something lacks"

"Looking at the problem rather than solution to the problem"

"Not taking the time to address problems"

Additional data that was collected from the post-assessment for this study were the following:

- Participants averaged a 7.72 on a scale from 1 to 10, when asked how confident they felt in
  articulating the cultural capital they hold.

- Participants averaged a 7.63 on a scale from 1 to 10 when asked how similar the data on the
  infographic was to their individual academic and life experiences.

- 48% of final participants shared they viewed their Latinx experiences as helpful when navigating
  higher education

- 100% of final participants shared this experience was helpful to them when learning to articulate
  their cultural capital.

Overall, the results from the post-assessment questionnaire continued to emphasize two

concepts at large: (1) students need spaces and opportunities to articulate their capital, and (2)

deficit-oriented thinking is not what should lead support initiatives.

Before engaging in this action research, only three individuals had heard of the term "capital" as

it pertains to cultural wealth. After engaging in this study, not only did participants identify what capital

is, but they also were able to identify their own types of capital that has shaped who they are.

Changes and Applications.

As mentioned throughout this study, providing areas to learn about capital, cultural wealth, and

to engage in dialogue that perpetuates these findings is needed by all. Latinx individuals need to know

that their experiences are important, their stories are worthy of active listening, and that their realities

have made them holistically successful as they are.

When higher education as a whole is able to recognize and offer spaces of active engagement to

Latinx communities, students and administrators will be able to finally celebrate cultural wealth as it

should be. As Dr. Arauz (2012) has been repeatedly referenced, those who have learned how to integrate

content knowledge and to view their realities as assets have been the most culturally resilient and most

prepared for overall *excellencia*. Deficit perspectives believe Latinx students arrive at post-secondary

institutions lacking in a multitude of ways. And while this minoritized community may be deprived of

many opportunities, it does not give administrators the right to oversee the ganas, grit, orgullo, tenacity,

and pride that comes with being Latinx.

Summary of Major Findings

Overall, this action research aimed to identify the intersections of Latinx cultural wealth and

holistic success. In doing so, the cultural practice of platica was used to enhance the study's experience

and integrate opportunities to storytell as it pertains to the Latinx community. While many realizations,

both personal and academic, were observed, major findings were identified to support the aim of this

research.

Success to Latinx community was better defined by not only academic success, but also by being able to achieve what is necessary to give back to those that recognized potential and offered support from the very beginning. This also offered a much more comprehensive understanding of how much more influential familial capital and aspirational capital are to one another for Latinx cultures. Furthermore, these findings suggested that one of the types of long-term capital that motivates the Latinx community is aspirational capital which hopes to obtain financial stability, repay sacrifices, and to someday bring honor to the family name.

The verguenza that was associated with listening to Spanish music and eating traditional cuisine in an un-diverse setting identified gaps within representation and within the Cultural Wealth Model (Yosso, 2006). When higher education and Latinx individuals do not acknowledge where they are starting and coming from, the battle of authenticity and the roots of upbringing become a lot for an individual to handle while navigating the system not built for them. The goal should not be to move beyond what Latinx life for the community was and turn to assimilation, rather, the goal is to celebrate Latinx communities and continue to build on the achievements of Latinx cultural wealth.

The realities of these participants also highlighted that while this minoritized community may be deprived of many opportunities, it does not give anyone the right to oversee the ganas, grit, orgullo, tenacity, and pride that comes with being Latinx. The orgullo and la cultura is what shapes who we are. When institutions celebrate the Latinx community, it allows for them to also celebrate themselves and recognize their culture matters. How Latinx experiences, and cultural traditions, shape this community and provide strength in academic navigation has not been recognized for too long. Latinx stories and the cultural resilience they give life to, matter.

By recognizing and implementing the cultural capital of these communities, higher education as a whole begins to cater towards Latinx students that are seeking to have their educational needs met in a system that has often rejected them. When an institution acknowledges and provides support for the

experiences brought by their Latinx students, it cultivates an enriching environment in which students can excel from.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

This study acknowledges that there are various limitations that could have changed the overall findings and outcomes. While this action research aims to inform the types of support needed by the Latinx community, there is much more work to be done to solidify best practices per the following limitations.

Location and Population Size

While San Diego has a Latinx community that is exponentially increasing in size, so does the rest of the country. This action research only focused on 12 individuals who were located within the greater San Diego community. To best understand the capital that frames the types of support needed by the Latinx community, there would need to be a much larger sample population to survey.

Additionally, one could argue that with such a small sample size, the stories of Latinx students continue to be generalized. While these stories are far too common, it is important to note that the realities and data collected throughout this work only provides insight to the lived experiences of 12 individuals. The Latinx community comes with diverse generations, academic backgrounds, and varying cultural values that influence the types of support needed.

Time and Capacity

The initial methodology of this action research proposed more opportunities for participants to share their stories in individual and group settings. Because of time constraints that came about due to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, work schedules, and personal life conflicts, research cycles were adjusted to only allow for one individual interview session.

Had there been more opportunities to storytell, outcomes to this study would have been able to better understand, articulate, and pinpoint certain types of capital that can best inform how higher

education can enhance the Latinx experience.

Differences in Cultural Values

To re-emphasize, the Latinx community represents a multitude of cultural differences, practices, traditions, and values. To continue disrupting deficit views, institutions need to understand these differences within the community. This research did not fully provide opportunities for individuals to distinctly characterize and fully explain their cultural differences and specific values that differed between a participant from El Salvador to a participant from Michoacan.

With additional recognition of differences the outcomes to this study could have also identified recommendations on how to support specific populations that may hold traditional values or linguistic capital at a much higher level than do other Latinx cultures.

Gaps in Academia

In conjunction with the time and capacity of both participants and researchers, had there been additional opportunities to introduce participants to the types of capital and provide even more insight to the purpose of this study, additional and more refined findings could have been achieved.

Commonly used terms in higher education are not necessarily well known outside of higher education itself. Throughout the study, there were moments that participants shared struggles with understanding certain key terms and concepts. That said, time within interviews was taken to further explain said concepts and definitions to the participants. With a longer timeframe and additional time to meet with individuals, there could have been a clearer understanding and ability to communicate to all participants prior to engaging in each research cycle.

<div align="center">

Institutional Recommendations

</div>

Acknowledgement of Institutions

To effectively move past deficit-oriented perspectives, institutions will need to acknowledge the basis on which they view their Latinx communities. This not only calls for leadership in higher education

to disrupt their deficit views, but this also means that administrators, staff, faculty, and the student body itself, will need to acknowledge and move past Latinx deficit views. Institutional accountability will open the door to reflection, reassessment, and will finally begin the real work that comes with recognizing the assets Latinx cultural wealth and cultural resilience bring to an institution.

Engagement Plan in the Form of Orientation Structures for Students and Families

The outcomes of this action research identified that familial and social support in the form of siblings and mentors play a significant role for Latinx academic journeys. This means that institutions should capitalize on parent and family involvement that best shape and support the educational experience their students want from their institutions.

Familismo was identified as the cultural ties and obligations students have to giving back and meeting the high-expectations families impose. And while this is also a driving factor, there needs to be an effort by the institution to reframe what support from families can look like when onboarding these students.

Post-secondary institutions need to consider identifying their incoming demographics for students and families and building onboarding programs that suit the needs of the diverse population. Orientation sessions should be offered in both Spanish and English at the very least, opportunities to engage with staff and faculty that can communicate with families in their native tongue should also be present. There should also be opportunities to debunk what academic success looks like for "cookie-cutter" students and should rather educate both students and families on what academic trajectories could look like based on their specific situations.

Ideally, the recommendations of involvement to students should also include diverse opportunities. Commonly, students find the ability to integrate and navigate academia by joining a club or organizations. While this is proven effective, there are other motivators that tend for Latinx students to engage in the form of on-campus jobs. Now that this has been recognized, onboarding processes

should invite campus partners who employ students and enhance their engagement while also providing the opportunity for further connection.

Engagement Plan in the Form of Plática

Higher education as a whole needs to learn from the way students learn through plática-inspired practices and truly see their students for who they are. The worst thing anyone can psychologically do to a person is not see them. When educators and administrators view a student holistically, they should be able to reform and provide the best possible support in all aspects of higher education.

Assessment in the form of surveys and engaged platica should be integrated throughout a students academic journey. The influence of different types of capital can vary over time. Identified capital itself can change. When leadership and specifically faculty spend the time engaging and actively listening to learn what shapes the populations they serve, they can better adapt to serve to who they cater.

A two-year pilot program should be considered for all institutions that provide monthly opportunities to converse with the Latinx community on campus, as well as be extended to the families and working staff on campus. The conversations, platicas, and story-telling initiatives should be on the schedules of anyone who can implement policies and procedures, as well as any unit who advises and engages with Latinx students.

Training and Professional Development for Higher Education Staff and Administrators

In conjunction with institutional accountability, leadership must recognize how much power they have over reforming institutional practices and initiatives that affect Latinx students. Oftentimes, there is a running belief that leadership and administrators are too busy to engage in face-to-face interactions with these students. There is also a belief that these leaders are too busy to attend opportunities of growth for Latinx support and development. These ideas and beliefs need to be debunked and accountability needs to be honored.

Training and professional development that focuses on how to identify and acknowledge Latinx capital while also pinpointing opportunities for units to capitalize on the capital should be offered. An institution touches the academic journey of a student through so many ways. Every single member of the institution should be expected to know who they serve. That starts with offering the opportunity to educate oneself on how to engage in practices that allow for students to share what they need and how they are supported best.

It is important to acknowledge so much of this diversity work falls on the backs of minoritized students, when in reality, all this work should be taken up by the institution which is built on systems that deprive Latinx students of the support, encouragement, and engagement they need to be holistically successful.

Personal Reflection and Closing Remarks

The concept of cultural wealth and resilience were not something I had known of before starting this program. I had always assumed who I was and how I came to where I am today had nothing to do with my Latinx experience and had everything to do with so many other things. While I know that the support from family and friends has been huge, I learned through this experience that I have the ganas to do so much more than I ever thought possible. This opportunity to conduct action research on my community has been the highlight of my entire career and being. I not only got the opportunity to learn and grow from what it means to be Latinx, but I also got the chance to reflect on who I am as a person and what type of work I want to bring into my higher education experiences.

During this work, I came to the realization that our Latinx community has been overlooked for far too long. The stories, the memories, and the food shared throughout was a moment of community and the epitome of culture I wish so many more took the time to understand and learn from. The love for our families and the hope to someday give back to anyone that provided support truly is what drives our decisions moving forward. The beauty behind Latinx culture is that we want to

grow, have a better life, and hope that someday, our children and grandchildren will know a life

without the obstacles anyone of us had to face. In struggle, there is unity. And in our unity, there is

hope that the world will recognize the determination for excellence we all carry.

This world is growing, society is changing, and we can no longer be deprived of greatness

because of the color of our skin, the food we eat, or the languages we speak. I hope that this action

research touches any individual who needs to know they are not alone, that their stories matter, and

that to be Latinx is to crecer en la excelencia.

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Appendix A

Glossary

American Dream: a sort of ethos or set of beliefs that drive many U.S. citizens as they work toward

creating a life for themselves. This set of ideals is arguably centered around the belief that each

individual has the right and freedom to seek prosperity and happiness, regardless of where or

under what circumstances they were born (CFI Education, 2015)

Assimilation: refers to the process through which individuals and groups of differing heritages acquire

the basic habits, attitudes, and mode of life of an embracing culture (Merriam-Webster, 2022)

Capital: an accumulation of goods and/or systems, especially gained at a specific time and in contrast to

income received during a specific period (Yosso, 2006)

Chicanx: rooted in a social justice movement that seeks to empower Mexican and Mexican American

communities — used as a gender-neutral alternative to Chicano or Chicana (Gallardo, 2014)

Cultural Resilience: the way an individual's cultural background, supporters, values, and environment

experiences help navigate and overcome adversity (Clauss-Ehlers, 2004)

Cultural Wealth: the product of the six forms of cultural capital students of color bring to college:

aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital (Yosso, 2006)

Deficit-Oriented Thinking: the negative perceptions, assumptions, generalizations and beliefs held by

some faculty, staff, and administrators towards marginalized communities (Carales and López,

2020)

Hispanic: of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent and especially of Cuban, Mexican,

or Puerto Rican origin living in the U.S. (Gallardo, 2014)

Imposter Syndrome: a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success.

'Imposters' suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override

any feelings of success or external proof of their competence (Corkindale, 2008)

Latinx: recognizes those whose roots stem from Latin America — used as a gender-neutral alternative to

Latino or Latina (Salina and Lozano, 2017)

Plática: cultural practice used as inquiry, pedagogy, and a development for community-building

(Guajardo and Guajardo, 2013)

Appendix B: Pre-Assessment Questionnaire

Disrupting the Deficit with Latinx Cultural Wealth: *Creciendo en la Excelencia*

There are minimal risks involved in this research. Please understand that this study is voluntary, and you may opt-out at any point if you feel discomfort related to the process.

1. What is the highest level of education you have completed or working towards?

    a. Associates degree in progress
    b. Associates degree
    c. Undergraduate degree in progress
    d. Undergraduate degree
    e. Graduate degree in progress
    f. Graduate degree

2. Are you working professionally in higher education?

    a. Yes
    b. No

3. If you answered yes above, in what area of higher education do you work in? (ie: Academic Advising, Residence Life, Student Affairs, etc.)

    a. Open answer

4. What is your gender?

    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Non-binary/third gender
    d. Would not like to disclose

5. Which term do you identify with?

    a. Latino
    b. Latina
    c. Latinx
    d. Other: open response

6. Do you identify as a first generation college student?

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure
    d. Other: open answer

7. Part of the study includes a possible in-person gathering, (if San Diego County COVID protocols permit gatherings). Are you located in San Diego County?

    a. Yes
    b. No

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. The types of capital are defined below

and have also been linked with a more in-depth definition of the term for your reference.
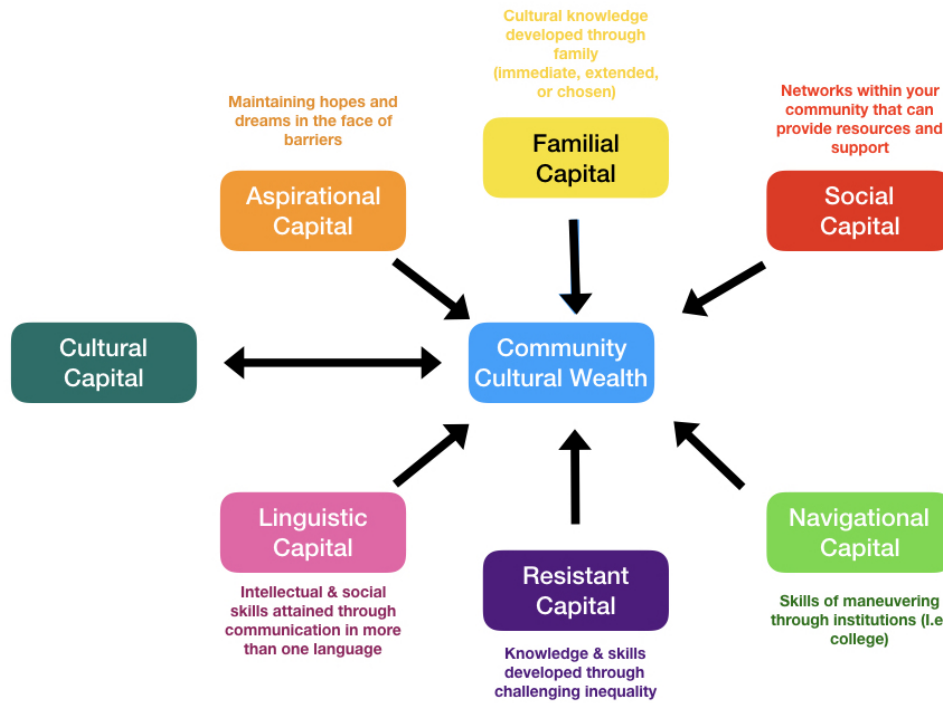
Developed from, "*Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth*" by Tara J. Yosso

LINGUISTIC CAPITAL

Please identify the <u>Linguistic Capital</u> you hold/held during your time as an undergraduate or graduate student that helped you navigate your academic journey. If you are now/also professionally working within higher education, please also identify the Linguistic Capital you hold when working within higher ed if different.

	I am a Spanish speaker	I live(d) in a Spanish-speaking only household	I live(d) in an English and Spanish speaking household	Other: open answer
As an undergraduate student				
As a graduate student				
while working professionally in higher education				

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Please identify Social Capital you hold/held during your time as an undergraduate or graduate student that helped you navigate your academic journey. If you are now/also professionally working within higher education, please include Social Capital you hold when working within higher ed if different.

	Friends within the Latinx community	Friends outside of the Latinx community	Mentors within the Latinx community	Mentors outside the Latinx community	Work peers	Teachers/ Professors	Sports teammates	Other: open answer
As an undergraduate student								
As a graduate student								
While working professionally in higher education								

FAMILIAL CAPITAL

Please identify Familial Capital you hold/held during your time as an undergraduate or graduate student that helped you navigate your academic journey. If you are now/also professionally working within higher education, please include Familial Capital you hold when working within higher ed if different.

	Mother figure	Father figure	Siblings	Cousins	Grandparents	Additional extended family members	Non Biological family members	Other: open answer
As an undergraduate student								
As a graduate student								
While working professionally in higher education								

ASPIRATIONAL CAPITAL

Please identify Aspirational Capital you hold/held during your time as an undergraduate or graduate student that helped you navigate your academic journey. If you are now/also professionally working within higher education, please include aspirational capital you hold when working within higher ed if different.

	Mother figure	Father figure	Siblings	Cousins	Grandparents	Additional extended family members	Non Biological family members	Other: open answer
As an undergraduate student								
As a graduate student								
While working professionally in higher education								

RESISTANCE CAPITAL

Please identify the Resistance Capital you hold/held during your time as an undergraduate or graduate student that helped you navigate your academic journey. If you are now/also professionally working within higher education, please include Resistance Capital you hold when working within higher ed if different.

	Attending a predominantly white institution (PWI)	Working against negative stereotypes	Being the only person of color in a workplace/organization /club/team	Engaging in a space where you do not meet social norms	Other: open answer
As an undergraduate student					
As a graduate student					
While working professionally in higher					

education					

NAVIGATIONAL CAPITAL

Please identify <u>Navigational Capital</u> l you hold/held during your time as an undergraduate or graduate student that helped you navigate your academic journey. If you are now/also professionally working within higher education, please include Navigational Capital you hold when working within higher ed if different.

	Second-generation (or older) college student	Held a job as undergraduate/ graduate student within the institution you attended	Joined club and/or organizations during your time as an undergraduate/graduate student	Used resources available at your institution	Had (a) mentor(s) within Latinx community	Other: open answer
As an undergraduate student						
As a graduate student						
While working professionally in higher education						

Appendix C: La Plática Individual Interview Questions

Script for La Plática Individual Interview:

Facilitator Script: Hello and thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this study. I want to remind you that this study is voluntary, and you may opt out at any point if you feel discomfort related to the process today.

The purpose of this study is to examine which factors have contributed to the success and resilience of the Latinx community within higher education, specifically within the greater San Diego area. We hope to collectively explore how the findings can inform higher education leaders and staff to create culturally responsive support systems of inclusion and better capitalize on cultural wealth the Latinx community brings to higher education overall.

Please feel free to ask any clarifying questions and/or review of definitions for the types of capital. I can also provide a copy of a blank questionnaire to review if you need it.

[Then, I will ask the following questions]:

1. **Did anything asked in the questionnaire surprise you?**
2. **What are types of capital that you feel were still missing?**
3. **Which type(s) of capital resonated with you the most? the least?**
4. **What capital do you hold that you feel has made you the most resilient?**
5. **When you experience or use a form of capital, do you experience any shame or guilt? How did you move forward?**
6. **What are ways higher education could have best celebrated and supported you while you were navigating your academic journey?**

Appendix D: Disrupting the Deficit Infographic

Disrupting the Deficit with Latinx Cultural Wealth:
Creciendo en la Excelencia

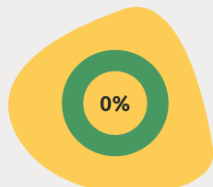This infographic reflects the data compiled from the twelve pre-assessment questionnaires and interviews completed.

Overview of Participants

- All **12** identified as **first generation college students**
- **6** are **working on** their undergraduate or graduate-level **degrees**
- **6** identified as **Latina or Latinx**
- **6** identified as **Latino or Latinx**

75%
50%
92%
17%

Familial and Social Support

- **75%** shared they had support from their **mother** throughout their academics
- **50%** shared they had support from their **father** throughout their academics
- **92%** shared they had support from their **siblings** throughout their academics
- **17%** shared they had support from **nonbiological family members**

0%

0 participants identified having a Latinx mentor during undergrad

While no one identified having a mentor within the Latinx community, **67%** of participants noted having a **non-Latinx mentor**
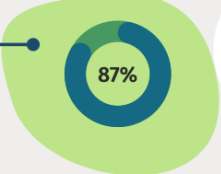
All participants identified having various types of social support, including:

- Greek life
- Non-Latinx communities
- Work colleagues and peers
- Sports teams
- Teachers and professors

Communication is Key

87% of participants identified as **Spanish speakers**. Only about **17%** of participants felt they were able to clearly communicate about their academic experiences in Spanish

87%

Navigation of High Education

Top three ways participants best navigate(d) through their academic journey are by:

1. **Joining** a club and/or org on campus
2. **Using** resources offered by their institution
3. **Working** a job on campus

Resistance at Work

Pertaining to undergraduate institutions:

- **83%** felt they worked **against negative stereotypes** during undergrad
- **67%** felt they engaged in spaces where they **did not** meet social norms
- **50%** attended spaces where they were the **only person of color** present

---

It is incredible to see what makes us so **unique**, and even greater to see what **unites our experiences** as well! This section highlights only a small portion of all the **realities shared throughout this study**.

I hope that as you review **participants' quotes**, you are also able to **see** and **celebrate** a reflection of your **culture wealth and resilience**!

La Raza

"Meeting people that looked like me, who lived same situations like me, who came from the same place as me"

"So I feel like if I had a Latinx mentor in education earlier on, I wouldn't have felt these feelings as much"

"My friends made all the difference in my life because they came from where I came from"

"I felt like I could ask all the questions because they were similar to me"

Buscando la Excelencia

"My mom liked to say 'I didn't cross the board then, for you to have a regular job!'"

"Echele ganas, mija"

"I've always had a lot of love and support from my siblings, even in bad times"

"My parents had high expectations for me that I can actually do like whatever I set out my mind to... and if you don't, that's fine"

Orgullo a la Familia

"I want to bring honor to my family, but also show my sisters its possible"

"I want to someday, hopefully, give back to my parents"

"The hope to get a high paying job to provide for myself and build a strong foundation for a family"

"I aspire to have a career where I'm able to make my parents proud"

La Vergüenza

"I was super embarrassed that I didn't listen to the same music that my friends did"

"I was worried of people making the assumption that I'm not well educated, because I'm speaking in Spanish"

"At lunch I would bring my recycled container with like mole, or like just some authentic Mexican food and upon like looking at it, my friends would be like ew!"

La Cultura

"How I was raised made all the difference"

"In the Mexican community, you don't stop being part of the family at 18"

"I may experience guilt just because I feel very privileged with my circumstances of having a group of people who want to see me succeed"

Appendix E: Post-Assessment Questionnaire

Disrupting the Deficit with Latinx Cultural Wealth: Creciendo en la Excelencia

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this 10-question Post-Assessment Questionnaire!

As a reminder, there are minimal risks involved in this research. Please understand that this study is voluntary, and you may opt-out at any point if you feel discomfort related to the process. As you answer each question, please feel free to elaborate as much as you can. You can also leave questions blank if you choose not to respond.

1. **Did anything you mentioned in your interview surprise you? If so, why? If not, why did your answers not surprise you?**
2. **On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you in articulating the <u>cultural capital</u> you hold? (1 = not confident, 5 = somewhat confident, 10 = extremely confident)**
3. **Which of the findings shared on the infographic resonates with you the most?**
4. **Which of the findings shared on the infographic resonates with you the least?**
5. **On a scale of 1-10, how similar is the data on the infographic to your individual academic and life experiences? (1 = not similar at all, 5 = somewhat similar, 10 = extremely similar)**
6. **How would you define <u>deficit-oriented thinking</u>? Have you heard of deficit-oriented thinking before today?**
7. **How would you define resilience? Do you feel you are resilient?**
8. **Do you view your experiences as a Latinx individual helpful when navigating through higher education?**
   a. **Yes**
   b. **No**
   c. **I am not sure**
9. **Do you feel universities and/or institutions provided you the space to share what shapes your <u>cultural wealth</u>?**
   a. **Yes**
   b. **No**
   c. **I am not sure**
10. **Was this experience helpful to you?**
    a. **Yes**
    b. **No**
    c. **I am not sure**

Appendix F: Final Disrupting the Deficit Infographic

Disrupting the Deficit with Latinx Cultural Wealth:
Creciendo en la Excelencia

This infographic reflects an overview of the action research and data compiled from the twelve pre-assessment questionnaires, individual interviews, and post-assessment questionnaires completed.

Purpose of Study

In 2019, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities reported only **19.5% of the total number of undergraduate students were Hispanic and Latinx undergraduates.** That said, the graduation rate of Latinx students at four-year institutions is still **12% lower** when compared to the graduation rates of White non-Hispanic students in the United States (Latino College Completion, 2020). The Latinx population is expected to **exponentially grow** within the next few years, meaning all institutions can **expect a higher enrollment of Latinx students.**

We've learned in previous research that those who have **learned how to integrate** and **view their experiences as assets** have been the most **culturally resilient** and are most **prepared to achieve overall excellence.**

Additional research suggests the way higher education can **support academic success** for Latinx students is by **countering deficit perspectives** of Latinx communities. In doing this, institutions would need to **acknowledge what Latinx students value and offer, instead of** identifying what they presumably lack.

By applying concepts of **community cultural wealth** (Yosso, 2006) and an **asset-based framework** (Johnson and Bozeman, 2012), this action research project identified the **different types of capital Latinx individuals hold.**

Data emphasized what **skills and realities fuel Latinx cultural resilience,** as well as suggested initiatives to **build on** Latinx students' **navigational excellence.** The overall outcomes of this study emphasized the need to **understand the intersections of** cultural capital and **holistic success of Latinx students.** Findings also highlighted avenues necessary to **disrupt deficit-oriented thinking** in an effort to **drive change** in higher education for the types of **support needed by Latinx students in San Diego.**

Research Questions

- What cultural capital do Latinx students hold and value most during their academic journeys?
- What are the intersections of cultural capital, support, and success for Latinx students in higher education?
- How can storytelling and understanding disrupt deficit-oriented thinking aid initiatives in higher education?

Overview of Methodology

This study focused on **12 participants** that identify as **members of the Latinx community** within the **greater San Diego area** and also attended, or are attending, an accredited **4-year institution.**

Each participant:

- Completed an anonymous Pre-Assessment Questionnaire
- Participated in an individual 45-minute interview
- Reviewed an infographic that disclosed the group's holistic data
- Completed an anonymous Post-Assessment Questionnaire

Highlights of:
Pre-Assessment

This segment reflects an overview of the data compiled from the twelve pre-assessment questionnaires completed.
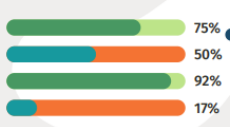
Overview of Participants

- All **12** identified as **first generation college students**
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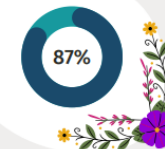- **6** identified as **Latino or Latinx**

Familial and Social Support

75%
50%
92%
17%

- **75%** shared they had support from their **mother** throughout their academics
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0%

0 participants identified having a Latinx mentor during undergrad

While no one identified having a mentor within the Latinx community, **67%** of participants noted having a **non-Latinx mentor**

All participants identified having various types of social support, including:

- Greek life
- Non-Latinx communities
- Work colleagues and peers
- Sports teams
- Teachers and professors

Communication is Key

87% of participants identified as **Spanish speakers.** Only about **17%** of participants felt they were able to clearly communicate about their academic experiences in Spanish

87%

Navigation of High Education

Top three ways participants best navigate(d) through their academic journey are by:

1. **Joining** a club and/or org on campus
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Resistance at Work

Pertaining to undergraduate institutions:

- **83%** felt they worked **against negative stereotypes** during undergrad
- **67%** felt they engaged in spaces where they **did not** meet social norms
- **50%** attended spaces where they were the **only person of color present**

Highlights of:
Individual Interviews

This segment reflects an overview of the data compiled from the amazing stories shared during the 45-minute individual interviews.

La Raza

"Meeting people that looked like me, who lived same situations like me, who came from the same place as me"

"So I feel like if I had a Latinx mentor in education earlier on, I wouldn't have felt these feelings as much"

"My friends made all the difference in my life because they came from where I came from"

"I felt like I could ask all the questions because they were similar to me"

Buscando la Excelencia

"My mom liked to say 'I didn't cross the border then, for you to have a regular job!'"

"Echele ganas, mija"

"I've always had a lot of love and support from my siblings, even in bad times"

"My parents had high expectations for me that I can actually do like whatever I set out my mind to... and if you don't, that's fine"

Orgullo a la Familia

"I want to bring honor to my family, but also show my sisters its possible"

"I want to someday, hopefully, give back to my parents"

"The hope to get a high paying job to provide for myself and build a strong foundation for a family"

"I aspire to have a career where I'm able to make my parents proud"

La Vergüenza

"I was super embarrassed that I didn't listen to the same music that my friends did"

"I was worried of people making the assumption that I'm not well educated, because I'm speaking in Spanish"

"At lunch I would bring my recycled container with like mole, or like just some authentic Mexican food and upon like looking at it, my friends would be like ew!"

La Cultura

"How I was raised made all the difference"

"In the Mexican community, you don't stop being part of the family at 18"

"I may experience guilt just because I feel very privileged with my circumstances of having a group of people who want to see me succeed"
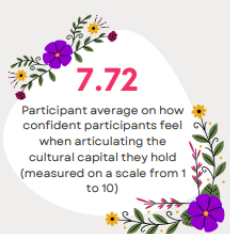
Highlights of:
Post-Assessment

This segment reflects an overview of the data compiled from the review of the original infographic (Appendix D) and completion of the post-assessment questionnaire.

Shared Surprises

Below are what participants shared when asked if they were surprised by anything they shared or focused on during their individual interview:

- "Yes, I thought it was surprising how much I **focused on financial motivation** compared to others"

- "I was just surprised by how **a lot of the help I received was through my family**"

- "I think I was surprised that I honestly **could not say exactly what I did to make it through college**. I just did"

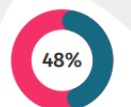- "I was surprised **I did not recognize other capital**"

7.72

Participant average on how confident participants feel when articulating the cultural capital they hold (measured on a scale from 1 to 10)

48%

of final participants shared they viewed their Latinx experiences as helpful when navigating higher education

50%

of final participants shared they felt universities and/or institutions provided you the space to share what shapes your cultural wealth

Defining Deficit-Oriented Thinking

After reviewing the concept of "deficit-oriented thinking", participants were asked to define their understanding of the term.

- "I would define it as the "No Child Left Behind" action which in my opinion cripples excelling students and students who can reach that potential. **If I would've thought like that, I would not be where I am today**"

- "I would define deficit-oriented thinking as a mindset that **focuses on the negatives characteristic** or **what someone or something lacks**"

- "Looking at the **problem rather than solution** to the problem"

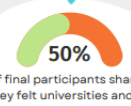- "Not **taking the time** to address problems"
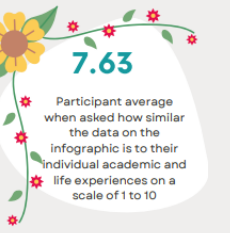
Definition of Resilient

Participants were asked to define resilience and were then asked to identify if they perceive themselves as resilient. below are some of their responses:

- "The ability to **keep moving forward** regardless of the situation. Yes, I am resilient"

- "I would define resilience as **overcoming intentional or unintentional barriers**. It is **learning from your mistakes** to move forward and **grow despite the odds** being against you"

- "**Not letting** the **bad** things **over take your life**. Yes, I am resilient"

- "**Overcoming** obstacles that may present themselves. **Yes, I am resilient**"

7.63

Participant average when asked how similar the data on the infographic is to their individual academic and life experiences on a scale of 1 to 10

100%

of final participants shared this experience, was helpful to them when learning to articulate their cultural capital

Summary of:
Key Findings, Recommendations, and Limitations

Key Findings

Success to Latinx community was not only defined by academic success, but also by the **ability to achieve what is necessary to give back** to those that recognized potential and offered support from the very beginning.

Furthermore, these findings suggested that one of the types of **long-term capital that motivates** the Latinx community is **aspirational capital** which hopes to obtain **financial stability, repay sacrifices, and to someday bring honor to the family name**.

The verguenza that was associated with listening to Spanish music and eating traditional cuisine in an un-diverse setting **identified gaps within representation and within the Cultural Wealth Model** (Yosso, 2006).

The goal should not be to move beyond what Latinx life for the community was and turn to assimilation. Rather, the goal is to **celebrate Latinx communities and continue to build on the achievements** of Latinx cultural wealth.

The realities of these participants also highlighted that while this minoritized community may be deprived of many opportunities, it does not give anyone the right to oversee the **ganas, grit, orgullo, tenacity, and pride that comes with being Latinx**. The orgullo and la cultura is **what shapes who we are**.

Institutional Recommendations

- **Acknowledgement of Institutions**
- **Engagement Plan in the Form of Orientation Structures for Students and Families**
- **Engagement Plan in the Form of Plática**
- **Training and Professional Development for Higher Education Staff and Administrators**

Limitations

- **Location and Population Size**
- **Time and Capacity**
- **Differences in Cultural Values**
- **Gaps in Academia**

Disrupting the Deficit with Latinx Cultural Wealth:
Creciendo en la Excelencia

Action Research conducted by Stephanie Pineda