The Necessity
of Hispanic Leadership
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The topic of research for this paper is the necessity of Hispanic leadership in the United States. It has been proven there is a lack of Hispanics in leadership positions throughout the U.S., despite being the largest minority group of the country. This investigation identifies some programs which have been implemented to provide opportunities for people of Hispanic origin to have leadership positions. Furthermore, the success of incorporating Hispanics into leadership allows for diversification, different perspectives, and ultimately success. The conclusion of the analysis illustrates the effect of Hispanics in leadership and how it meets the needs of one of the largest minority groups in the United States.

Businesses continually look for what gives them the edge over their competition. Some businesses may look for new merchandise to sell, lower their prices on specific products, run promotions, or advertise to a specific market. These types of decisions are made by the leaders of these organizations. Thus, the idea of qualified leaders who cover every aspect of a business and its target market is essential to the success of that entity. Quality leadership includes diversity of cultures, genders, race, and ideas.

The need for diversity in leadership in the business world has received plenty of attention over the past decade. Organizations have recognized the benefits of having diverse leadership and attempt to keep up this trend. These benefits are stated by Eleanor Wilson (2014), in *Diversity, Culture,*

and Glass Ceiling, "Diversity means variety, and the benefits of having diversity within corporations can include productivity" (p. 83). People from numerous cultures, languages, and backgrounds come to America to live out their dream. Among these, the people of Hispanic descent comprise the largest minority group. Thus, an increase of Hispanic leadership within the infrastructure of businesses throughout the United States would help meet the needs of this group. Integrating Hispanics into leadership positions allows an organization to be diverse, subsequently helping the business to achieve success and reach its goals.

Hispanics (people who are Spanish speakers, as opposed to Latinos, which include Brazilians) make up 18.1% of the American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017) and are the largest minority group in the nation. Being the largest minority in the United States is something that should be addressed from a leadership standpoint. Leaders who can meet the wants and needs of the Hispanic influence in the U.S. are essential. Hispanic leaders can better understand and satisfy the wishes of this population as well as bring new ideas to businesses from a different perspective. Furthermore, incorporating Hispanics into leadership positions strengthens the idea of diversity within leadership roles in organizations.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a negative stigma associated with people of Hispanic origin and their ability to lead. While there has been an emphasis on improving the diversity in leadership in business entities, there still seems to be difficulties for Hispanics to attain these positions. A study performed by Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR) reported that just over 11% of board or executive positions in Fortune 500 companies are held by Hispanics (Lopez, Solis, & Vergara, 2015).

Hispanics may not be given leadership positions due to prejudiced behavior. A document in the University of Utah archive, *VP for Academic Affairs SOCIO 1970-1983*, illustrates this. The record includes a letter written by an unnamed person from the office of Senator Orin G. Hatch stating, "Dear Ramon, Thanks for the letter. I am not surprised you cannot read. With a name like Rodriguez, your parents probably can't either" ("SOCIO Contributions," n.d.). Although the unnamed person was let go from

Senator Hatch's office, this example exemplifies common prejudice towards Hispanics. This type of conduct is a case of a person judging someone else based on their race. It demonstrates that despite having the ability to write and read the letter sent to Senator Hatch's office, someone mocked the idea of a Hispanic being interested in furthering his/her educational dreams. Prejudiced behaviors are commonplace in the United States and, as such, Hispanics may have difficulties attaining leadership positions.

However, despite facing plenty of adversity while searching for leadership positions, Hispanics will not pass up these opportunities when presented. Many programs have been implemented throughout the United States to ensure Hispanics receive proper leadership training. Programs such as Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund have been established with the goal to help people of Hispanic origin not only succeed in life, but also to provide leadership opportunities for those who participate.

Programs are experiencing great success, as noted in *Hispanic Leadership Pipeline* written by Ted Martinez, Jr. and Susan A. Herney. These authors discuss how they founded the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) in 1985 to provide leadership roles to Hispanics. This program has been successful in offering opportunities as Martinez and Herney state, "There are more than 250 NCCHC Leadership Fellows program alumni, most of whom serve in executive leadership capacities in community college administrations" (Martinez, Jr. & Herney, 2017, p. 25). The NCCHC proves to be a well-established program supporting Hispanics and their ability to attain leadership positions.

While Martinez and Herney note the success of their program, they hope to see more Hispanics in positions of leadership; noting on the academic level, half of Hispanics enrolled in higher education attend community college, yet "Hispanics account for less than five percent of community college CEOs" (Martinez, Jr. & Herney, 2017, p. 25). As alluded to by Martinez and Herney, Hispanic leaders in higher education can help to motivate these students to achieve their educational goals.

While there is a lack of Hispanic leadership in the business world, there are still people of Hispanic origin in prominent positions. Two of the world's largest companies, The Boeing Company and Cingular, have Hispanic leaders in key decision-making positions. Phillip de St. Aubin is head of the International Relations operations for The Boeing Company and Ralph de la Vega oversees network operations for Cingular.

Bruce E. Phillips (2006) writes about the success of these two men, despite the racial adversity they faced over the course of their careers. In an interview with St. Aubin, Phillips learned that, "Boeing hired mostly Americans to oversee different regions for the company. Now, he [St. Aubin] says, they are more likely to hire people from those regions to represent the area" (p. 23). Additionally, Phillips spoke with de la Vega who stated, "We want people of all backgrounds who represent the diversity of the marketplace"(p. 23). Both St. Aubin and de la Vega spoke about the importance of cultural diversity within the workplace and the crucial role it plays regarding the success of their respective companies. St. Aubin and de la Vega illustrate why it is essential to have leaders of Hispanic origin. It allows The Boeing Company, Cingular, and the operations of these two companies to have a different perspective and point of view.

The need for diversification in leadership, specifically Hispanics in leadership positions, has never been more prominent. As the Hispanic population continues to rapidly grow in the United States, it is important to integrate leaders who meet the needs of this group of people (Lopez et al., 2015). St. Aubin and de la Vega are key leaders of Hispanic origin who successfully support the needs of the largest minority group of the United States, alluding to the necessity of Hispanics in leadership positions. By integrating more Hispanics into leadership, companies will undoubtedly have success in the business world.

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