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Primera Pero No La Última: Exploring Cultural Impact in the Early Career Development of First-Generation, Latina College Graduates

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Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics, College of Liberal and Professional Studies in the School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania

Advisor: Kimberly Torres, Ph.D.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to better understand the early career development of second-generation, millennial Latinas and the impact of ethnicity, race, and social class on their early professional lives. Latinas are by no means a monolithic group. However, shared experiences and language enable me to categorize them as one population for this study. I focus on individuals whose families originate from socioeconomic disadvantaged origins with few human and financial capital resources in the U.S. This study explores how the college experience differs among those who attended a highly selective, historically white university with a small, Latino population in comparison to those Latinas who attended a Hispanic-serving institution where the presence of Latino-identified students is high. The goal of this research is to acquire a deeper understanding of how shared elements of Latino identity present unique strengths and/or barriers for young, Latina professionals. Latinas are one of the fastest growing populations entering college and the United States workforce. Therefore, understanding the nuances of the culture and its potential effects on young Latina professionals' growth and social mobility is critical to strengthening the recruitment and retention of Latinas in 21st century corporate America.

Keywords

early career development, second-generation millennial Latinas

Comments

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EARLY CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF FIRST-GENERATION, LATINA COLLEGE
GRADUATES

By

Andrea Alhadari Patton

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics,
College of Liberal and Professional Studies
in the School of Arts and Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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University of Pennsylvania

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2022

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Approved by:

Dr. Kimberly Torres, Ph.D., Advisor

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to better understand the early career development of second-generation, millennial Latinas and the impact of ethnicity, race, and social class on their early professional lives. Latinas are by no means a monolithic group. However, shared experiences and language enable me to categorize them as one population for this study. I focus on individuals whose families originate from socioeconomic disadvantaged origins with few human and financial capital resources in the U.S. This study explores how the college experience differs among those who attended a highly selective, historically white university with a small, Latino population in comparison to those Latinas who attended a Hispanic-serving institution where the presence of Latino-identified students is high. The goal of this research is to acquire a deeper understanding of how shared elements of Latino identity present unique strengths and/or barriers for young, Latina professionals. Latinas are one of the fastest growing populations entering college and the United States workforce. Therefore, understanding the nuances of the culture and its potential effects on young Latina professionals' growth and social mobility is critical to strengthening the recruitment and retention of Latinas in 21st century corporate America.

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This capstone is dedicated to my mother. Gracias por enseñarme el valor de la perseverancia y hablar por mí misma. Siempre has sido mi mayor campeona en actividades educativas y profesionales. Gracias por la vida que trabajaste tan duro para darme. Te amo.

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Lastly, a very heartfelt thank you to my research participants. I have never felt prouder to be a Latina than during our conversations. You lit a fire in me that I didn't know existed. We may be the first in our families to navigate many "systems", but we are working hard to ensure that we won't be the last. ¡Adelante!

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this capstone is to understand how growing up in the Latino culture plays a role in career navigation and to understand how Latina first-generation college students' experiences vary by institutional selectivity and the social and cultural capital that is accessible to them. How much of one's early career development is influenced by factors specific to being a Latina who grew up as the child of immigrants and is the first in their family to pursue a baccalaureate degree? Are these factors consistent amongst other first-generation college student demographics? For Latina graduates, how does representation (or lack thereof) during their college experience and/or work environment impact their upward mobility. When I reference "culture," my intention is to explore Latino norms as they relate to ethnicity, generational status, gender, nativity, and social class(es), and their impact on upward mobility in corporate environments for young, professional Latinas (Karsten & Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2016; Cruz & Blancero, 2017; O'Neill et al., 2013). There are three questions I asked myself and led to my hypothesis:

- In retrospect, how does this group of young Latinas working in corporate America perceive their respective upbringings as impactful on their college and early career choices?
- What social, academic, and professional resources are these women utilizing to support their career development?
- How do traditional Latino(a) gender norms play a role in their decision-making and advocating/negotiations at work?

This capstone will explore these inquiries and attempt to answer the overall, main question that is my hypothesis: how do cultural implications that impact the early career development of Latinas who are first-generation college graduates?

Background

The demographics of the United States are rapidly changing. As the population continues to diversify, so is the applicant pool for colleges and Universities. The National Center for Education Statistics highlights in its annual undergraduate enrollment report that while total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions decreased by 5 percent between 2009 and 2019, enrollment of Hispanic students increased by 48 percent; Asian, Pacific Islander, and individuals identifying as two or more races also saw increases, while White and Black numbers decreased. In addition, female enrollment consistently outpaces male enrollment across the decade, with female students making up 57 percent of total undergraduate enrollment (2020).

Access to education is an ongoing topic of discussion across the United States; research shows there is a significant gap in the quality of education for neighborhoods that are racially and ethnically diverse (Vallejo, 2012; Massey, 2020). As institutions increase financial aid and wraparound support for underrepresented or marginalized populations on college campuses, first-generation college students have become an audience of particular interest (Cahalan & Perna, 2015). The Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (known as NASPA) reported 56% of undergraduates nationally were first-generation college students in the 2015-2016 academic year. Within this audience, Hispanic/Latino(a) individuals comprise the second largest demographic of both first-generation and continuing-generation college students (RTI International,

2019). This is unsurprising, as the Latino(a) population growth has outpaced general population growth in every state over the last decade (Gamboa & Acevedo, 2021).

While the census uses the terms Hispanic and Latino(a) interchangeably, the words have different meanings. Hispanic refers to individuals who are Spanish-speaking or descend from Spanish-speaking countries in Spain, Latin America, and the Caribbean while Latinos(as) refers to those who descend from Latin American countries and cultures, not just those that are Spanish-speaking; the definition of Latino(a) the definition does not include European countries (Lopez et al., 2021). In the United States, both terms are utilized as racial categories and which is inaccurate because Spanish-speaking populations are composed of various racial and ethnic groups and come from countries all over the Caribbean and Latin America, with the exception of Brazil. *The Views on Race in America* report by The Pew Research Center (2019) finds most people have little preference over which term is used. However, country of origin labels (i.e., Mexican, Cuban, or Peruvian) are preferred to these pan-ethnic terms. Latinos are by no means a monolithic group. However, shared experiences such as common language, cultural commonalities, and immigration experiences enable me to categorize them as one population for my study. Throughout this capstone, I will reference the population by the label used in the research being referenced.

A trend report on indicators of higher education equity by Cahalan & Perna (2015) for the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education revealed an alarming data point; bachelor's degree attainment rates at 2-year and 4-year institutions were 66 percent lower for students from low-income families than for students from high-income families. The report references Census Bureau data for family income

quartiles, with the bottom being less than \$34,160 and the top being over \$108,650. Specific to this research, the term first-generation college student is defined within the Higher Education Act of 1965; individuals whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree or regularly resided and received support from only one parent, that of which did not complete a baccalaureate degree.

When first-generation students arrive at college, especially at highly selective institutions, they are often not as prepared for the competitive academic environment as their more privileged peers whose parents have completed postsecondary education (Cahalan & Perna, 2015; Torres and Massey, 2012; Charles et al., 2009). In addition, some literature suggests that students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often lack the requisite high-status social and cultural capital of their more affluent peers, and these perceived deficits can negatively impact their acclimation to college life and scholastic success (Jack, 2019; Vallejo, 2012; Torres, 2009).

When referencing social capital, I utilize sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's definition from his publication with Loic Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*—“the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (1992, p. 119). Bourdieu presents a separate form of social capital: cultural capital. In a university setting, this refers to credentials and qualifications such as academic degrees and titles that symbolize authority.

Institutions' Role in Building Social and Cultural Capital

Colleges and universities have developed multi-million-dollar initiatives to address inequities in access and attendance of first-generation students at post-secondary

institutions and to eliminate those that prevent these individuals from thriving (Snyder, 2018; Drake & Porterfield, 2020). When first-generation students arrive at college, especially at highly selective institutions, they are often not as prepared for the competitive academic environment as their more privileged peers. Those who were raised in poor households or lacked a mentor to guide their education and early career development struggle to acculturate (Cahalan & Perna, 2015; Morton, 2013; Vallejo, 2012). Take building relationships with faculty as a prime example. A multi-generational college student may be advised by their parents on how to build relationships with professors and access opportunities for research, which can be perceived as advantageous. Having cultural capital equips you with the knowledge that faculty relationships are an important social capital to attain.

Students who benefited from supplemental educational services (SES) such as Upward Bound and Project GRAD and/or are educated at private schools are often able to navigate multiple communities with more ease, compared to those raised in poor households (Cahalan & Perna, 2015). This concept is known as cultural code-switching, in which individuals can step in and out of their life roles with varying degrees of ease, accommodating their behavior to the various cultural expectations (Morton, 2013). Lacking mentors or exposure can result in early career development struggles such as workplace assimilation and opposing values as they switch between communities (Torres, 2009; Vallejo 2012; Morton, 2013; Jack 2019). The concept of code-switching in professional environments has led me to question how the type of institution may also play a significant role in career-readiness.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

I received a bachelor's degree from Florida International University. Now I am enrolled in a master's program at the University of Pennsylvania, where I also work. This has given me two varied experiences- the former being a Hispanic-Serving Institution and the latter being a historically White, highly selective Ivy League university. I am interested in learning how representation within the college experience, coupled with the resources and support services offered may have different impacts on the development of its graduates. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined by the U.S. Department of Education as those with an enrollment of undergraduate full-time students that are at least 25 percent Hispanic at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application (*White House initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics*, 2022). Most Latino students enrolled in two and four-year schools attend HSIs (Martinez & Santiago, 2020). However, institutions where Black and Hispanic students disproportionately receive their credentials spend less per student and are less well-resourced (Libassi, 2018).

Florida International University is one of the largest HSIs in the U.S., with 64 percent of its student body— undergraduate, graduate, and professional— identifying as Hispanic/Latino (Martinez and Santiago, 2020) compared to the University of Pennsylvania's Diversity Facts and Figures website reporting that ten percent of their undergraduate student body is Hispanic or Latino (2020). When considering integration into the corporate mainstream, what role does a Hispanic-serving institution play in the early career development of its graduates?

A study by Stella M. Flores and Toby J. Park (2015) explored the graduation outcomes of Black students who attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Hispanic students who attended HSIs compared to those who attended 4-year state schools in Texas. The researchers found there was no difference in graduation rates; they do note the lack of research on HSIs and intangible benefits such as personal development and peer and alumni networks. Students may be graduating at the same rate, but are their chances of successfully navigating the early years of their career equal from a preparation standpoint?

Inequities with Gender and Race of Working Latinos(as)

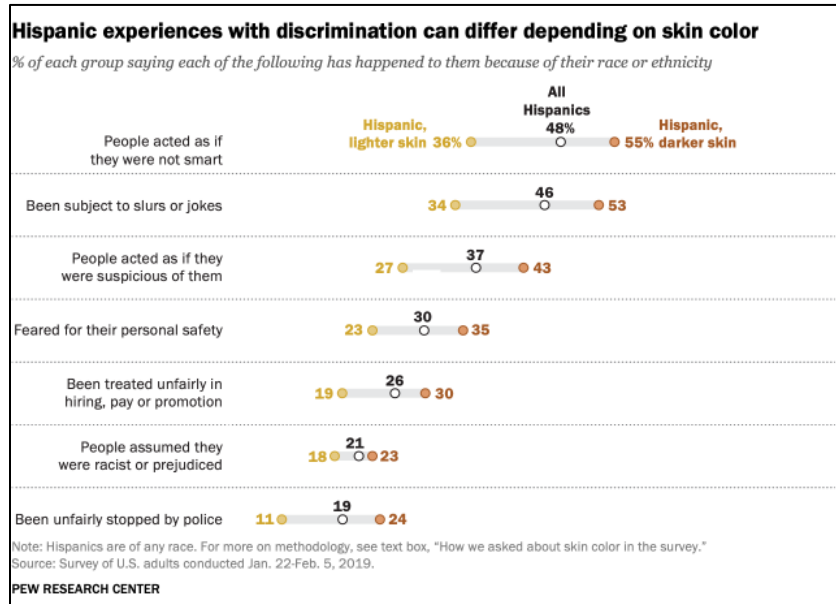
I found scant research about what happens to these students after college graduation and even less when focusing on women. Odd, considering women make up most undergraduate students. A college degree is directly correlated with higher earnings and lower unemployment (Calahan & Perna, 2015) than just graduating from high school alone. If the rate of Latino(a) students entering higher education continues to increase, why is there so little research on their presence in corporate America? Latina women are overrepresented compared to white women as bachelor's degree earners in the fields of business, management, and marketing; the ratio of Hispanic female students to white female student degree earners showed a ration of 114.9 percent per 1,000 bachelor's degrees awarded (Libassi, 2018). Understanding the nuances of cultural impact as the young professional women in my research begin to navigate corporate careers can help strengthen recruitment and retention of Latinas in corporate America.

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the number of Latino(a) college students has doubled since 2000, making them only one of two college groups to

see an increase in college attendance (2020). Nearly half of these Latino(a) students are the first in their family to attend a 4-year college (Excelencia in Education, 2019). When considering gender, the inequalities are vast. Consider a degree in education— research conducted by The American Center for Progress (2018) found the ratio of Hispanic women students receiving a bachelor’s degree in education to white women students was 56 percent. Black women fare no better coming in at 53 percent. Academic literature on Latinos(as) and Blacks at selective colleges and universities shows self-esteem and self-confidence are significant factors of successful, early academic performance (Charles et al., 2009). Evidence also shows having a teacher of the same race helps students of color succeed in school (Libassi, 2018).

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the number of Latino(a) who identify as multiracial increased from three million to 20 million in the last decade. Views on Race in America, a study by the Pew Research Center, highlights the varying concepts around race and skin color add another layer. As shown in Figure 1 on the following page, Latinos with darker skin are more likely to experience discrimination than those who are white-passing or have lighter skin (Horowitz et al. 2019) This study also found that half of Hispanics identify their race as white and were less likely to report they had experiences discrimination because of their race or ethnicity. From questioning intelligence to unfair employment practices, darker skinned Latino(a) folks have an additional barrier of racial inequality they struggle with. More than half of survey respondents in this study also believe being poor, Muslim, black, or Hispanic puts people at a disadvantage in society while being white, wealthy, and a man helps a lot.

Figure 1. Hispanic Experiences with Discrimination Based on Skin Color



A study by the Society for Human Resource Management, in partnership with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, highlights that Hispanics currently comprise 16 percent of the overall U.S. labor market and they will account for one out of every two new workers entering the workforce by 2025 (Coulombe & Gil, 2016). But while these statistics show a growing labor force, 82 percent of Hispanic employees are non-exempt, meaning their roles are typically minimum wage or hourly roles such as retail and service industry; Latinas only represent just over one percent of executive roles (Lopez et al., 2020). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics highlighted Latina women had the largest wage gap of any other racial or ethnic group in 2020.

The Impact of the Current Global Crises

Moreover, the global COVID-19 health crisis and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement have brought diversity, equity, racial inequality, and inclusion conversations to a head. Recent government statistics reveal the negative impact the pandemic has had

on the Latina workforce; women accounted for 100 percent of U.S. job losses in December 2020, with Latina women alone accounting for 45 percent of that job loss (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). The BLM movement thus forced organizations to prioritize social and racial justice initiatives, especially for underrepresented, socioeconomic disadvantaged Latinos and Blacks (Jan et al., 2021).

As the number of Latinas seeking degrees grows, so will the number of those entering the corporate mainstream. Understanding the nuances of Latino culture and its potential effects on young Latina professional growth and social mobility makes it vital to developing substantive DE&I programs in organizations. These programs, along with other professional spaces, enable young Latinas to navigate corporate careers and strengthen their recruitment and retention in 21st century corporate America (Cruz & Blancero, 2017; Vallejo, 2012).

For the purposes of my capstone, I want to explore the cultural implications of gender norms placed on Latinas. A 2009 study by Nicol M. Valdez and Van C. Tran highlights a plethora of research linked to gendered expectations within Latino(a) families and education to patterns of achievement. One example in this study is how Latina women may earn higher grades in school and learn to adopt mainstream standards more successfully, but many of their occupational decisions are influenced by family, background, and gendered expectations. These decisions can hinder career development; coupled with the wage gap it signals the cultural belief that a man's work is more valuable. In traditional Latino families, men are the providers while women are the caretakers and homemakers. Recent research focused on second-generation Americans within the Latino community shows a female advantage with regards to education and

occupation but not with economic resources. The study brings to light that Latinas might be graduating and securing jobs at higher rates than Latinos, but they are less likely to own a home (Valdez & Tran, 2009).

If Latinas are currently achieving at higher rates than their male counterparts, and overall Latinos are pursuing college degrees at a record-breaking number in a time where higher education is strategically recruiting first-generation college students, I find myself wondering where the disconnect lies. Why does the Latina wage gap exist? Why is there so little research on Latinas' presence in corporate America and why is the representation of Latina executives so low?

Personal Background

My personal experience is my motivation and inspiration for this topic. In recent years, my professional work at University of Pennsylvania (Penn) has included race and identity-based engagement and mentorship programs. One key initiative has exposed me in depth to the wraparound support and pipeline programs focused on first-generation college students *and* graduates. As the daughter of Peruvian and Lebanese immigrants, words like “first-generation” and “highly aided” were not identity markers during my formative years. I grew up in a mostly Latino community in South Florida where our grocery store tellers did not speak English and many friends escaped communist Cuba. Being first-generation everything was the norm.

Succeeding academically and pursuing a bachelor's degree was an expectation and I never questioned the notion that college was unattainable. I was not encouraged to consider schools that would take me away from home or would require loans to live on campus or pay for out-of-state tuition. I received a full scholarship to a university that

recruited heavily from local schools - most of my classmates shared similar identities. There was no special treatment or school resources providing you with additional support because of your racial or socioeconomic background. Nobody sat you down to discuss the importance of internships, research, or making connections with your professors with the mindset that you were not having those conversations at home.

As a Latina woman, I was brought up being told not to disrespect or push back on those who were my senior or in positions of power. This mindset was not limited to my own family or social circles. Anyone who was your superior fell into that category as well. When you were given opportunities, you were grateful and did not question if it was equitable. There wasn't anyone teaching you the art of negotiation or how to navigate the politics of the workplace. I have personally seen the impact of this conditioning on my own attempts at upward mobility— navigating difficult conversations and negotiations with those who are my senior, not just in title, but age.

When I reflect on my college graduation, I cannot remember if a significant number of my friends graduated with “career jobs”— full-time jobs with benefits were simply jobs. There were no conversations around a position that simply paid the bills and one that helped advance your professional journey in a specific field. Except for an uncle who was a business executive, most members of my family held non-exempt roles such as executive assistants in healthcare or aviation. I had no knowledge or guidance on how to evaluate my benefits package or to negotiate my salary. I did not negotiate my salary for my first position, nor did I understand the pay was below the industry average. I was one of five women hired for the same role as a traveling consultant. One day, we discussed our salaries and realized none of us had negotiated and we were all being paid

the same. When the small staff grew and added its first male employee, it was the first time I observed a coworker vocally advocating for salary adjustments and added benefits.

I have worked at Penn for four years and have seen incredible support and financial resources that are allocated specifically to first-generation and low-income college students; for example, funding for unpaid internships or summer research programs is available for most students with robust financial aid packages. I have focused on learning from Penn staff so that I can be more strategic in my professional work and annual review process. This proved successful quickly, as my colleagues provided coaching and informational interviews that provided insight into the salary negotiation process. Within a year I had navigated the office politics of salary adjustments, concluding in my salary being increased by 13 percent.

At Penn, there is also a Latino cultural resource center (La Casa Latina) that provides programming specific to the needs of students who, too, largely identify as first-generation. While there are upper and middle-class Latino(a) students at Penn, it's those who tend to lack upper-class social and cultural capital indigenous to the Ivy League that gravitate towards engaging with this space. At La Casa they find community and staff support that understands their cultural backgrounds and tailor resources to their identities. Study breaks are marketed as “Cafecito con La Casa,” which pays homage to the coffee hour that many Latinos embrace. Events are even catered by local Latino restaurants to provide students with a taste of home.

The Weight of Mental Baggage

Recent research within the past decade reveals that physical and mental barriers these students encounter such as imposter syndrome, the lack of social and cultural

capital, competing with peers who were more academically prepared due to quality of education, and the tension to honor one's upbringing while simultaneously moving beyond it are just a few (Cano & Castillo, 2010; Charles et al., 2009; Olson, 2016; Vallejo, 2012). It is not enough to get into college; they must get *through* college.

Considering cultural gender norms, Latina college students are often also faced with a “double-bind” where they are expected to be successful in their academic pursuits while upholding traditional cultural values such as *familialism* (Cano & Castillo, 2010, p. 222). The study highlights Latinas that who attend predominantly white colleges and universities may adopt the attitudes and behaviors of the institution's culture. This acculturation can be perceived as ‘whitewashing’ by other members of the Latino community; it is a point of distress for Latinas who must now live up to familial expectations while attempting to acclimate socially and academically in their efforts to be successful. Cultural code-switching is almost a necessity but can cause distress as Latinas adopt values and ideas they deem necessary to succeed in White, wealthy spaces (Castillo et al., 2004; Morton, 2013; Vallejo, 2012).

Part of my role responsibilities include programming for first-generation and/or low-income students and alumni (known at Penn as the acronym FGLI). These students have shared their desire to build their own social capital and fine-tune their networking skills in a “safe space”. Through these conversations came the launch of Penn FLASH, a mentorship platform specifically designed for first-generation and/or highly aided students at the University. Serving as a member of this product launch team has increased my passion for growing FGLI students' equity. Hearing their stories has provided me with a powerful opportunity of self-reflection. As I hear about their ambitions and

worries, I recall navigating the unknown as a college student preparing to graduate. I may have had resources available, but I didn't even know what to ask or look for. Part of that is never feeling like a minority. Everyone around me was struggling with the same issues. It never occurred to us that our identities or upbringing were a barrier to our success.

Identity-Based Research & Methodology

I found myself wondering if FGLI students continue to encounter cultural and social capital barriers after graduation. For purposes of my capstone, I want to know: Is it impossible for first-generation college graduates to achieve equal success to their multi-generation peers? Knowing about the layered struggles that Latinas face with ethnicity and race (including skin color and hair texture), gender, and familial expectations, can we better prepare them to navigate the early stages of their career? While many of these barriers intersect across Latino ethnicities and even across minorities in general, why are Latinas paying such a high price through pay inequity and a lack of representation in corporate America? When considering attempts at acculturation, is there a difference in early career development for Latinas who felt like the minority in college versus those who attended a Hispanic-serving institution? How does that experience play out after graduation and find themselves in a corporate environment?

Research on first-generation college students suggests this population has a very individualized journey (Tate, 2019). For example, Black and Latino(a) college graduates see a lower return on their degrees than white graduates: for every \$1 in wealth that accrues to median Black households associated with a college degree, median white households accrue \$11.49. Meanwhile for every \$1 in wealth that accrues to median Latino households associated with a college degree, median white households accrue

\$13.33. Disparities go beyond pay. As of 2011, 73 percent of white households owned their home while only 47 percent of Latinos(as) and 45 percent of Blacks owned theirs (Sullivan et al., 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Homeownership is the primary source of wealth for most families and neighborhood locations determine inequity, especially when considering access to high quality school systems (Vallejo, 2012).

I chose to focus on Latina women in professional, white-collar occupations because of my personal journey and connection to these identities, but also because I found a gap in the literature specific to the industry. This exploratory study has a small sample with potentially varying results, considering institutional selectivity. Extant quantitative and qualitative research (Maestas et al., 2013; Olson, 2016; Rode et al., 2008; Storlie et al., 2016) informs my study, and I conducted interviews to complement the research findings and provide nuanced, deeper understanding to trends that arose from my conversations with participants.

My Roadmap

A plethora of research exists on first-generation college students as it pertains to education access and retention (Cahalan & Perna, 2015; Charles et al., 2009). However, very little exists on what happens to these students once they graduate and enter the workforce. In Chapter Two, I highlight existing literature on this demographic, specific to career development beliefs of first-generation college students, college-to-workplace transition, and gaps in career success. It will also explore existing data on Latinas in the workforce, as well as the overall population of young, Latino(a) individuals in professional, white-collar roles. It is important to understand the individualized trends of these audiences and where they converge.

This convergence lays the foundation for the analysis and discussion of my data in Chapters Three and Four, where I aim to answer my research question— *Are there cultural implications that impact the early career development of Latinas who are first-generation college graduates?* My data collection consists of two parts, a screener survey, and qualitative interviews. The method of qualitative interviewing was ideal for my study, as it enabled me to gain in-depth perspective and lived experiences of my target population, from formative years to current outlooks on their professional journeys (Ritchie et al., 2013). This exploratory study’s modest sample contributes to existing social science literature and research, hopefully inspiring others to focus on this historically underrepresented population of the workforce that is quickly growing.

I discuss my key research findings in Chapter Five, where I summarize my results and discuss how to apply them to existing best practices and recommendations so that we can better support the professional growth of Latinas in corporate America.

Conclusion

The growth of the Latino population obtaining a college degree and entering the workforce is not narrowing the pay gap. In 2019, Latinas were paid 55 percent of white, non-Hispanic men’s wages and 81 percent of Hispanic men’s wages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Latinas are making a positive impact on the economy regardless of industry and rank; they are starting businesses at an increased rate and driving consumer decisions in their households (DePillis, 2019). So why does this economic disparity continue? In the wake of nationwide protests against racial injustice, initiatives and leadership hires for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) roles have surged (Jan et al., 2021; Maurer, 2019). Employees and consumers are demanding a true commitment to

DE&I practices that go beyond an official statement from corporate offices. Companies cannot simply show diversity amongst staff, but ensure diversity and inclusion are present at every level. They cannot simply hire. They must retain, invest, and develop these employees. A 2020 report by the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility found 82 percent of Hispanic employees in corporate America are non-exempt; this type of employee is hourly, earning an average of \$35,568 per year (Lopez et al., 2020). Both the number of women and Latino(a) workers continues to rise (Coulombe & Gil, 2016). Organizations must be prepared to support them similar to how other practices have been put in place to support other marginalized groups.

To me, effective leadership requires understanding your audience and prioritizing their development along with your bottom line. I want to carve out an area of focus for women like me, a Latina and the first in her family to graduate from college. This is about women who see beyond the hourly, administrative, or service roles their mothers only knew. What was a dream for their children is now being actualized by my generation. By having a better understanding of this demographic's unique characteristics and needs means having a stronger plan for their recruitment and retention. To be successful, companies need to welcome the large number of first-generation Latina women to the workforce.

CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Equal access to education is an ongoing topic of discussion across the United States. The momentum of the social justice movement brought forward during the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd has brought variations of the phrase “diversity, equity, and inclusion” into conversations across every workplace. Society is demanding corporate America not only be aware but prepared to lead the charge for DEI within its walls or risk losing its stakeholders (Dowell & Jackson, 2020). As I discussed in Chapter 1, the number of second-generation Americans pursuing higher education, across ethnicities and races, is on an upward climb. In 2018, children of immigrants made up 28 percent of college and university students in the United States, a statistic that has continued to climb over the last decade (Batalova & Feldblum, 2020). The more first-generation college students graduate from 4-year colleges and universities, the larger the pool of diverse candidates who are prepared to enter the corporate mainstream.

To investigate my research question, it is important to first understand the existing literature focused on the various identities of my study’s focus. This literature review will focus on the following areas: career development of Latina first-generation college students, college-to-workplace transition of first-generation college students, perceived job and career success of recent college graduates, factors impacting sense of belonging at a Hispanic-serving institution and facilitating consciousness of racial identity for Latino(o) college students.

Career Development of Latina First-Generation College Students: to explore the concept of life-role salience of Latinas and how this, coupled with Latino/a values are associated with the career development of Latina first-generation college students at a primarily White institution. My qualitative interview study, utilizing a grounded theory open coding methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) highlights a set of themes and subthemes that can be used to support culturally sensitive career counseling practices (Storlie et al., 2016).

College-to-Workplace Transition: to study how first-generation college graduates adjust to workplaces that are significantly different from their parents' work environments. Early-career experiences come with learning how to navigate workplace politics; this research explores how family dynamics influence this experience (Olson, 2016; Valdez & Tran, 2019; Vallejo, 2012).

Perceived Job and Career Success of Recent College Graduates: to analyze the effects of ability and personality on intrinsic and extrinsic indicators of career success. This multi-year study used a sample of business majors who were surveyed as part of a college course and then, again, two years after their graduation (Rode et al. 2008).

Factors Impacting Sense of Belonging at a Hispanic-Serving Institution: Within the last few years, colleges and universities have adopted equity and access programs to diversify the demographic of their student populations (Drake & Porterfield, 2020). While statistics show an equitable representation of first-generation and continuing-generation college students on campuses, first-generation college students are disproportionately students of color and students from low-income backgrounds (Batalova & Feldblum, 2020; Engle & Tinto, 2008). For example, a study by Parks-

Yancy (2012) focuses on the career development of African American first-generation college students and found that, as compared to their peers, these students perceived few options for careers post-graduation and that social capital played a large role in their career development.

Facilitating Consciousness of Racial Identity for Latina(o) College Students: an examination of how increased critical consciousness of power dynamics tied to race and ethnicity can build strength and resiliency, and thus promote upward mobility of self and community (Cerezo et al., 2013).

In 2017, NASPA launched the Center for First-Generation Student Success (NASPA). Data has consistently shown that sustained institutional commitment paired with scalable student programming is necessary for first-generation college students' success (Cahalan & Perna, 2015). Investments made by colleges and universities to grow efforts show they are listening and adjusting to support these findings. What happens when these students graduate? College students become college alumni. Are the offerings throughout a student's four years on campus sufficient to prepare them for career development upon graduation?

The five main studies referenced in this literature review are my initial examination into the first-generation college graduate experience as it relates to professional development, focusing on research prioritizing Latinas and the influence of attending a Hispanic-serving institution. What factors influence Latina students' sense of belonging at college? Upon graduation, how do these young adults position themselves in the corporate mainstream with respect to their cultural backgrounds so as upwardly mobile Latinas?

There is scant research so far on the career development of first-generation college students as young professionals, focusing on college readiness and completion, or skipping forward to the overall impact of Latinos/Hispanics in the workforce (Cahalan & Perna, 2015; Gamboa & Acevedo, 2021; Lopez et al., 2020). While there are a few exceptions (e.g., Vallejo, 2012), I found even less research on the work experiences of Latinos(as) in professional positions within the private sector and instead, about blue-collar and hourly work. Navigating workplace politics, negotiating for remuneration, seeking mentorship or coaching, and career shifts can be a complete unknown to new professionals. Research shows the consumer impact of Latinos in America, their growing presence in higher education, and their impact on the working world, yet I could not find studies on their impact within corporate America (Coulombe & Gil, 2016; Gamboa & Acevedo, 2021; Libassi, 2018; Lopez et al., 2020; RTI International, 2019).

Quantitative studies do not capture the impact, meaning, or complex developmental experience of being both Latina and a first-generation college student in the United States. An in-depth understanding of the culture, values, and life-role salience experienced by Latina first-generation college students is essential to elucidate their complex career development trajectory... (Storlie et al., 2016, p. 305)

First-generation college students “changing subculture of reference” differentiates their career experience from the work life of parents and extended family, leaving them largely alone to navigate this transition (Olson, 2016, p. 203) whereas multi-generational graduates may be able to confer how to negotiate these social positions with family members who have similar professional experiences. Within the Latino culture, family and gendered expectations strongly influence career decisions for women (Valdez & Tran, 2019).

Cultural trailblazers: Exploring the career development of Latina first-generation college students (2016) is a study by Cassandra A. Storlie, S. Jeffery Mostade, and Deborah Duenyas, influenced by research that highlights Latinas are specifically influenced in their career decision-making process by Latino culture, values, and life roles. Storlie et al. specifically focus on the dissonance between these variables and the expectations of the American education system and traditional employer expectations; Latinas feel pressure to be compliant with positions of authority. The authors also highlight the concept of *role salience* which refers to the various “roles” we play in aspects of our lives where we spend the most significant amounts of time. These dictate social behavior and with Latina first-generation college students, their familial roles are expected to be prioritized above any other.

The researchers used grounded theory and a social constructivist paradigm to highlight emerging themes with regards to the values and life-role salience affecting Latina first-generation college students’ career development. Participants were recruited from a midwestern, predominantly white university, specifically Latinas in a coed Latino/a college student organization who identified as first-generation college students. The participant pool was composed of 10 undergraduate and graduate students, with an age range of 20 to 45. Multiple ethnicities were represented including Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Ecuadorian. Among the three researchers, two were first-generation college graduates themselves, and one identified as Latina. They did not discuss potential biases related to their shared social identities but disclosed to respondents their personal identities. There was no reference to researcher-as-instrument and how it may have

influenced the study. Results showed two overarching themes: *fitting in* and *redefining career development pathways*.

The theme of fitting in highlighted the individual struggles of each participant as they navigated their roles *fitting in on-campus* and *fitting in within their family*, as well as the *pressure to be Latina enough*. All participants shared a connection to their Latina first-generation college student experience and the disruption in their sense of belonging within both areas. The majority used language such as “isolation”, “outsider”, and “accusations” were used to reference internal feelings and familial backlash for being the trailblazer, or first in the family to pursue higher education. All participants spoke of their struggle to fit in at their primarily white university caused by affirmative action-relations justifications from classmates for their acceptance to the school and insecurities around belonging due to their ethnicity and lack of knowledge around how to navigate a college environment.

These struggles tied to a third subtheme around *not being Latina enough*— every participant expressed feeling judged due to their cultural background. This included subtle discrimination, known as microaggressions, related to ethnicity and skin color; one student recounted being told her skin and hair were too fair to be Mexican. The researchers did not dive into this area as much as the first two subthemes and did not share the racial composition of their participants. I found this area to be lacking and could have provided greater nuance to how this internal feeling was driving career development decisions or experiences.

Preparation and responsibility to give back were the subthemes found within redefining Latina career pathways. Participants shared they had questioned their cultural

identity because they broke away from traditional Latino cultural expectations to stay home and focus on starting a family (a connection to the notion above of not being Latina enough). Preparation refers to participants' seeking outside resources and knowledge about the higher education process because they were the first in their family to enter this territory, which is explored further in the Olson study (2016). Lack of financial literacy was a key area of focus in the data, along with the sacrifices made by family and the burden taken on by students to afford college. I would have appreciated the researchers pushing further to learn what individuals (i.e., school counselors, extended family, community leaders) provided them with assistance through the process. With six of 10 participants reporting feeling unprepared for the financial setbacks, researchers could have inquired about financial aid packages to identify possible correlations between aid recipients and financial literacy.

All participants expressed a strong desire to give back to their communities and families, noting their privileged opportunity to pursue a college degree. A direct correlation was made between participants' values and familial responsibility to their focus on career interests. Various participants' feedback illuminated stable career choices and related decisions were being made to avoid risking stability and maximize the guarantee of being able to support their families and communities.

The researchers identified *disrupting the sense of belonging* as an emerging theory among all participants' experiences. The disruption connects to the experiences of fitting in with both families and peers but goes a step further to note a disruption in their understanding of what is considered a traditional Latina career path. Participants also noted developing connections to their school's coed Latino/a student organization. A step

further in this research could have included making a connection to cultural code-switching (Morton, 2013). Did the students who expressed a greater disruption or lower sense of belonging have greater difficulty with code-switching?

The study ends with recommendations for academic environments to host informational workshops and programming that are family-oriented; exploring academic constructs that inform around college culture nuances (i.e., extracurricular activities and campus traditions) and provide coping skills for transitioning from high school to college. In addition, the authors recommend developing mentorship programs for Latinas and other minority groups. With this capstone exploring the next chapter in a Latina's career journey, post-college, it would be interesting to explore how Latina professionals are exposed to mentorship and informational programs. Do they navigate the early years of their professional journeys with greater ease? Overall, this study provides me with perspective on the impact family can have on Latinas' career navigation and how that may flow into early career mobility.

Opportunities, Obstacles, and Options: First-Generation College Graduates and Social Cognitive Career Theory, a study by Joann S. Olson (2016) focused on the college-to-work transition of first-generation college students. The research method used was that of phenomenology, or the study of lived experiences. While similar in terms of participant pool size to that of Storlie et al. (2016), this study was restrictive in that all first-generation college graduates were white and from a similar rural geographical setting. However, the study most closely aligned with how educators might assist first-generation college students beyond graduation.

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews, both in-person and virtually. They focused on life history, details of the experience, and reflection on the meaning of said experiences. With such a small data set, responses could influence future research by shaping assessment questions around key themes or helping build assumptions for research questions. Again, three themes emerged: starting the job, being in the job, and releasing the past. These seemed to mirror those from the previous study mentioned, simply adapted to a professional setting. Participants noted a lack of support to navigate their new environment, this time from coworkers who left them to experience “trial by fire” scenarios. No evidence is presented to highlight this is an experience specific to first-generation college graduates. However, skills like self-reliance and proactiveness may help them prevail in this environment above their peers. Where the data points to a difference between first-generation college graduates and multi-generational college graduates is the difference in how the scenarios are navigated in a new environment.

There are challenges by those who grow up in blue-collar households and find themselves in white-collar jobs, generally after attending college: “Soon enough, ‘Straddlers’ learn that straight talk won’t always cut it in shirt-and-tie American, where people rarely say what they mean. Resolving conflicts head-on and speaking your mind doesn’t always work” (Lubrano, 2004, p. 10). This experience was reflected in Olson’s study and mentioned how this differs due to environments or culture. Cultural workplace differences exist and arise across industries and regions. I found myself wishing to know how this viewpoint might differ for a multi-generational college graduate who was seeking guidance on workplace politics from a parent in a completely different work environment than their own, i.e., corporate versus non-profit.

Olson also discussed the theme of releasing the past - “the uneasy tension between honouring one’s upbringing while simultaneously moving beyond it. These men and women used terms like ‘very lower-middle class’ and ‘working class’ to talk about their hometowns” (p. 363). This incorrectly plays into the assumption that first-generation college students, graduates or not, are low-income. A study seeking to understand the first-generation demographic must be conscious of how data could be skewed if not intentionally seeking out first-generation college students who come from financially secure households.

Most interesting to me in the study were participants noting frustration with their first years following graduation, torn between assumptions made during college and the reality of their daily work as compared to an area of passion. The study showed that universal societal assumptions, rather than knowledge from experience, led to unfulfilling career decisions. Respondents were young professionals, no more than three years out of school, with all looking to make some form of a career change. A comparison of career pivot trends in a young professional’s early years might shine a light on whether this is a first-generation college student-specific phenomenon or simply generational. I appreciated Olson noting that these individuals may not have the language to articulate nuances of these uncharted waters with family and friends. If they cannot communicate it, Olson suggests they might be incapable of pursuing assistance that could alleviate the angst and uncertainty of participating in unfamiliar work settings. This point serves as an opportunity for institutions that are looking to engage their first-generation college graduates/alumni through contemporary programming around the post-college

experience. This study bridged a connection beyond ethnicity and race to the journey of those who are the first in their family to navigate college/university.

The early career success of college graduates served as the focus of the 2008 study by Joseph C. Rode, Marne L. Arthaud-Day, Christine H. Mooney, Janet P. Near, and Timothy T. Baldwin. Titled *Ability and Personality Predictors of Salary, Perceived Job Success, and Perceived Career Success in the Initial Career Stage*, the sample was recruited from a college course required for business majors at a large university in the central United States. Students were first surveyed during the course and then again to students who graduated within the last two years with degrees in business. The first survey measured emotional intelligence, general mental ability, and personality. The second measured career success, focusing on intrinsic factors (i.e., perceived success) and extrinsic factors (i.e., salary). Career success results in two factors, which researchers labeled as *job success*, where supervisors praise the work produced by respondents, and *career success*, where respondents felt their careers were progressing very well in comparison to their peers.

Rode et al. found that initial career success was only related to personality, suggesting that ability was not a key indicator for entry-level roles. They highlight this as a dilemma where personality plays a stronger role than performance, although they note that more objective performance data is usually not available in entry-level jobs, compared to later career stages. The findings suggest early upward mobility favors more charismatic personas and not those necessarily best suited for long-term career success. The study goes a step further to suggest this preference may result in retention issues of

individuals who have more ability but do not fit the corporate persona and do not feel appreciated by management.

The study controlled for gender but did not control for race, age, or education; the study sample was 43 percent female, with the majority being white (77 percent during the first survey and 79 percent during the second). The study lacks diversity regarding race and ethnicity. Few studies have focused on the predictors of early career success, as noted by the researchers of this study. A follow up study on mid-career success would be interesting, and future studies should control for race and ethnicity to further explore the findings, especially those which are more subjective.

The 2007 study by Ricardo Maestas, Gloria S. Vaquera, and Linda Muñoz Zehr titled *Factors Impacting Sense of Belonging at a Hispanic-Serving Institution* explores the impact of diversity in education, specifically in Hispanic-serving institutions, and how it may impact a sense of belonging for all students, not just those who identify as minorities. A sense of belonging is a recurring theme in a lot of the literature cited throughout this capstone (Morton, 2013; Stolie e al., 2016; Vallejo, 2012) and a factor I hypothesize will be prevalent within my own research. The student data for this study was from the University of New Mexico, which was collected as part of a larger, longitudinal study by The Diverse Democracy Project. University of New Mexico (UNM) is considered a Hispanic-serving institution. Data were collected in two waves, starting with a survey administered during freshman orientation and the second during the spring semesters of the students' sophomore year. Most participants were female at 66 percent and 33 percent Hispanic, with additional minority categories of African

American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and American Indian were represented at a combined 10 percent.

The study found a positive correlation between having the belief that paying for college is easy and a student's sense of belonging; additional background factors did not play a role. This suggests students' financial stability can impact their sense of belonging at their institution, regardless of them being the minority on campus. Additional factors found to increase a student's sense of belonging was faculty interest in their development and academic support programs. It also applied to all students at UNM, not just those who identify as minorities. Of interest was the positive impact of varying diversity-related experiences had on students' experiences. Attending a highly diverse university and having the ability to socialize across race and ethnicity contributed to the sense of belonging.

This secondary data analysis had its limitations. One concern is the disparity in diversity between survey respondents and the actual student population at UNM; the study had a higher representation of women and White students than the freshman cohort. In addition, there was a low return on the second wave survey, yielding a small sample. This data is specific to UNM. I would be interested to see additional studies that explore the sense of belonging at other HSIs and historically White institutions, especially considering how race, ethnicity, and gender were not factors that influenced outcomes of this study.

These considerations are further explored in the manuscript *Giving Voice: Utilizing Critical Race Theory to Facilitate Consciousness of Racial Identity for Latina/o College Students* by Alison Cerezo, Benedict T. McWhirter, Diana Peña, Marina Valdez,

and Cristina Bustos (2013). The authors review their development and implementation of LEEP, the Latina/o Educational Equity Project, a pilot program that aimed to increase Latino(a) students' connection between college completion and the upward mobility of their communities. The program was grounded in Critical Race Theory and aimed to work with students at PWIs, where norms and practices tend to cater mostly to white students. The LEEP program was piloted at three universities in the Pacific Northwest, where the student bodies ranged from 6,200 to 22,000 and where Latinos comprised just over three percent of the population. The format was broken down into four themes: building community, increasing critical consciousness, improving awareness of cultural congruity, and improving utilization of campus resources. Researchers prioritized ethnic matching (the program facilitators were all Latinas), noting the importance of centralizing experiential knowledge and having facilitators share racial-ethnic lived experiences and thus develop a sense of community and trust amongst student participants.

The program's primary goal was to broaden participants' views on the purpose of their educational environment and their needs being met by attending their universities. This meant looking beyond "fitting in" and how their educational success met a greater purpose, one that could equip them with knowledge and tools to effect change within their local communities. In essence, looking less at day-to-day needs and more at long-term possibilities; college completion means gaining necessary resources like a network or academic skills.

The researchers noted that program participants often commented on the importance of family and how the upward mobility of their entire family was tied to their college completion. This response aligns with the concept of *familismo*, a word used to

describe the value of deep commitment to one's family within the Latino(a) culture (Cruz & Blancero, 2017, p.486). This central value was often at the center of students' negotiating demands and a correlating factor between their sense of belonging on campus and how much they prioritized family demands (i.e., foregoing campus activities to go home and visit their family on the weekends). The program overview highlighted how facilitating conversations with students could help them process and come to terms with the benefits of their college experience and thus aid in the retention of said students. Because the manuscript only focused on the initial pilot, recommendations could include follow up assessment to track the retention of students completing LEEP. How can programs rooted in Critical Race Theory and the sharing of lived experiences by people of color directly impact the retention of college students? The very model empowers participants to reflect on their historical marginalization and shift focus to the benefits of access to traditionally normative (i.e., White) environments. In addition, could this model be adapted by companies who have formal programs, such as Employee Resource Groups?

The literature above highlights key themes found in the formative years of Latina and first-generation college students' development and understanding of career readiness and success. In the next chapter, I outline how the thematic variables and identifiers used to build my research instrument and target sample.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I provide an overview of my approach as a researcher, practitioner, and scholar to understand my hypothesis more deeply. I review the framework for research used, the sample, and data analysis process. My research protocol was submitted to the University of Pennsylvania's Institutional Review Board for approval, which was granted in January 2022. My study was small and therefore is meant to complement existing literature, hopefully inspiring future studies on this growing demographic. My research instrument can be found in the Appendix of this capstone.

Sample recruitment and data collection

As I have noted previously in this capstone, Latinos(as) are not a monolithic group. Therefore, I attempted to seek a more diverse representation of ethnicities and races amongst my sample. A screener survey was utilized for recruitment. Participants had to identify as Latina millennials working in corporate America and who were first-generation college graduates and second-generation Americans, meaning at least one parent was an immigrant. I further expanded my pool to include 1.5 generation Americans, as some participants migrated to the United States at a young age and could provide a similar life experience as those born in the U.S. The term *second-generation* describes individuals who have at least one immigrant parent who identifies as 'Latino,' and was born in a Latin American country, but they themselves was born in the U.S., as specified above (Rumbaut, 2011).

Participants must have graduated with their bachelor's degree from either University of Pennsylvania or Florida International University. Half of the study sample represents each school to provide a side-by-side comparison of those who attended a highly selective, historically White institution compared to those who attended a Hispanic-serving institution.

Participants were recruited through social media and snowball sampling; research participants helped recruit additional participants. This allowed me to avoid subjectivity that might arise from personal bias, as well as purposeful sampling to ensure a diverse participant pool, with representation across race, ethnicity, and industry (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For Florida International University, I utilized the LinkedIn and Facebook groups that I personally belonged to, along with direct outreach to individuals whom I knew may qualify or had large networks. For the University of Pennsylvania, I approached University administrators working at two race and identity-based cultural resource centers- La Casa Latina and the Greenfield Intercultural Center. The staff provided me with the contact information of former students who met my study requirements.

Interviews were used to collect data and learn more about how Latinas describe their experience working in corporate America. By listening to participants describe their experiences and how they tell their story, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of how their upbringing, education, and early career development has been shaped by their identity. Utilizing qualitative interviewing as my method for data gathering allowed me to understand how participants make sense of their ethnic, racial, class, and social circumstances and how they play a part in various lived experiences (Ritchie et al., 2013).

The formal interview was conducted over Zoom, so I could also document body language and participants' physical responses to the conversation. To gain a better understanding of participants' specific experiences, the interview guide's framework focused on: family background and upbringing; college experience as it relates to the community they had and career preparation; how they determined their education and career choices; their feelings towards their own career development and current workplace environment; and their engagement in workplace initiatives and relationships with colleagues at work. The formal interview allowed me to dive into a topic and target group not being focused on in current social sciences and other existing literature. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the data were coded to identify recurring themes that emerged during the conversations.

The data from both the screener survey and formal interviews have been arranged into tables to identify commonalities and trends more easily. The screener survey focused on participants' familial background and upbringing as it pertained to ethnicity, nativity, socioeconomic background, and educational history. This information was essential to forming a diverse, representative sample. It was also imperative for me, as the researcher, to highlight these factors that play a role in shaping the Latina identity (Storlie et al., 2016; Valdez & Tran, 2019) and how they navigate their academic and career goals.

The interview sample included 10 Latinas who self-identified as first-generation college graduates and second-generation Americans who work in corporate America. Three of the participants qualify as 1.5 generation Americans; they were born abroad and immigrated to the United States at a very young age. All but three identified as growing up low-income or poor, the remainder identified as middle-class. It is worth noting how

participants self-identified when asked about race and the variety of identifiers used and how a darker skin tone did not immediately correlate with individuals identifying as Black or other “mixed” racial labels. This is highlighted in Table 1 shown below.

Table 1. Participant Identity & Family Education

Name	Nativity	Race	Skin Tone Rating (1-5, light to dark)	Parents' Place(s) of Birth	Parents' Highest Degree of Education
P1	1.5	Other	2	Mexico	Middle School (F), High School (M)
P2	2	Latina	2	Mexico	Middle School
P3	2	Latina	2	El Salvador (F), Guatemala (M),	High school (M)
P4	2	White	3	Mexico (M), U.S. (F)	Elementary (M), Middle School (F)
P5	1.5	White/ Indigenous	3	Dominican Republic	Middle School
F1	1.5	Mulata	3	Dominican Republic	High school (F)
F2	2	Latina	3	Dominican Republic	High school
F3	2	White	3	El Salvador (M), U.S. (F)	High School
F4	2	White	2	Nicaragua (M), Peru (F)	High School
F5	2	Afro-Latina	4	Dominican Republic	Bachelor's (M)*

**Mother received a degree in the Dominican Republic that was not applicable in the U.S.*

Half the interview participants graduated from Florida International University (FIU) and the other half from University of Pennsylvania (Penn). As shown in Table 2 below, their time working in corporate America ranged from three to 10 years, and two participants had recently been accepted to pursue an MBA and had left/were planning to leave their roles to begin school. Two additional interviews took place but were removed from the dataset: one due to length of time in her role and the other due to industry.

Table 2. Participant Education & Career

Name	High School	School	College Aid (Need-Based)	Industry	Ranking of experience in corporate America (1-10, bad to good)
P1	Private*	Penn	Fully aided	Consulting	8
P2	Public	Penn	Fully aided	Finance, Technology	6
P3	Public	Penn	Fully aided	Financial Technology	8
P4	Private*	Penn	Half-aided	Commercial Real Estate	9
P5	Public	Penn	Fully aided	B2B Startup, Private Education	6
F1	Magnet (SAA)	FIU	Fully aided	Luxury Goods, Travel	5
F2	Public	FIU	No Aid	Consumer Goods	7
F3	Public	FIU	Half-aided	Information Technology	7
F4	Public	FIU	Partial Aid	Hospitality Marketing	7
F5	Public	FIU	Half-aided	Technology	8

**Charter/Prep school with pipeline scholarship programs targeting low-income youth.*

Self-as-Instrument

As shared in Chapter 1, the initial driver for conducting this study was directly correlated to my own experience as a Latina first-generation college graduate. Along with my interview guide, my personal experience allowed me to serve as an instrument in my own study. This methodological approach introduced by Rew, Bechtel, & Sapp (1993) enabled me to build authenticity, reciprocity, and credibility with research participants; discussing race and ethnicity in the workplace, even anonymously, required participants to trust me as the researcher. Briefly sharing my personal story and connection to the study's purpose allowed me to do just that.

Self-as-instrument requires attention and vigilance, to minimize personal bias. As a graduate of Florida International University and a current student at the University of Pennsylvania provided me with context and nuance of participants' stories. Having intimate knowledge of their shared lived experience also helped me to synthesize the data and interpret it more accurately. However, I could not allow my own experiences to cloud or interpret their stories in a way that aligned with my own experience. I found establishing myself as a fellow Latina when recruiting participants proved successful. Every participant expressed gratitude about the study's topic and used terminology like "you know what it's like" when sharing sensitive stories about their experiences. I believe establishing this rapport was integral to the full participation of my research participants (Maestas et al., 2007).

Limitations of the Study

As I have noted previously, this study is not intended to produce new information, rather, to complement the existing, limited research on Latinas in corporate America. The

modest, yet diverse sample size provides a glimpse into the lived experiences of an ethnically and racially robust demographic of women whose presence is consistently growing within the corporate mainstream. For example, there is an opportunity for researchers to dive deeper into how race (i.e., white passing versus Afro-Latina) and ethnicity (i.e., anti-immigration sentiments on Mexicans versus Cubans) play a role in shaping the identities of Latinas pursuing white collar roles. It is important to note my research did not ask participants to identify their gender identity or sexual orientation, which would add another intricate layer to a study on Latinas. In addition, exploring working Latinas who have familial responsibilities such as children or aging parents is necessary to further understand the driving factors of career choices such as pay, workload, benefits, and flexibility (Cruz & Blancero, 2017; Karsten & Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2016; O'Neill et al., 2013; Storlie et al., 2016)

Conclusion

There are many layers to my target sample that could have resulted in multiple, lengthy interviews. There are endless ways in which to collect data from the varying identities that make up second-generation Latinas navigating the corporate mainstream. The benefit to studying something that aligned with my work and lived experience not only provided me with data for this capstone but gave me the opportunity to apply what I was learning in real-time, both personally and professionally.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The purpose of this research is to better understand the lived, human experiences in its variety. People are multifaceted and Latinas are no exception. After speaking with the 10 participants, something became abundantly clear. The data represents a diverse range of industries within an equally diverse participant pool, various degrees of wealth, education, family composition, ethnicities, races, and geographical location. And yet, there was a variation of the same phrase that was stated in nine of the interviews, *“I have to look out for myself because nobody else will.”* Participants gave multiple examples throughout their formative years that highlighted an internalized feeling of isolation while navigating systems, both educational and professional. The concept of being the first generation in their families to navigate American constructs, the higher education system, and corporate America was ever-present.

The Ally and Identity Contradiction

Overall, participants’ narratives were equally mirror images and juxtapositions of one another. Every participant articulated a mindset of necessary independence and self-advocacy that was key to their upward mobility. However, eight of those who stated this also had at least one example of a pivotal moment when their career trajectories were positively impacted by an ally. Most interestingly, of those eight, the majority were white men, followed by white women. Two participants mentioned a romantic partner assisting them and only one participant noted that the advocate was a (male) person of color. Four of the participants mentioned utilizing identity resource groups specifically to navigate salary negotiations and career growth; two utilized a Latinas in Tech Facebook group,

one utilized a Women in Email Facebook group, and a fourth used an anonymous salary-sharing social media app. Some participants mentioned Latino Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), but only one spoke of it as a valuable resource. However, all who mentioned ERGs appreciated their existence; one shared that she had revived the group at a past company/employer, and another mentioned their existence at companies was factored into her job search priorities. They were grateful for the ERGs' existence and may even participate but were not explicitly connecting them to their upward mobility. This aligned with a study highlighting that while same-race mentorship can be a source of psychological safety and support at work, mentoring by non-Latino(a) Whites has been found to be more beneficial to the careers of minorities (Blancero et al., 2007).

The Power of Pipeline Programs

“Access to corporate America is a huge challenge,” one participant stated but was reinforced throughout most of my conversations. Six participants spoke about barriers they faced navigating unknown systems. The unfamiliarity of applying to colleges, interviewing for internships and jobs, and conversations with supervisors about promotions was ever-present:

“Loyalty doesn't pay and now I am behind my peers in pay and title.”

“Pray about it,” said a parent to the participant in response to her confusion on how to pick a college major

“I begged my parents for a laptop and spent all summer reading forums on how to get into college.”

“During the negotiation process, I saw RSUs as Monopoly money” referencing her lack of knowledge around stock options, equity compensation, and vesting

All five of the Penn graduates whom I interviewed had participated in some form of pipeline program. This included scholarships to attend schools with incredible wraparound support, funded college exploration programs, internship placement programs, as well as college matching programs for diverse and low-income applicants, such as QuestBridge. Only one FIU graduate shared being the recipient of a similar resource. Interestingly, this participant, along with three of the four Penn graduates mentioned above, also shared stories or statements of their Latina identity as an asset and how they actively promoted it in the workplace.

I had been curious about how the lived experiences of the Penn participants might vary from the FIU participants. Is there a difference when you are visibly the minority compared to the minority making up most of your community? I found that the greater differentiator was not in numbers but in their ability to acculturate into majority-white and oftentimes wealthy environments. They could code-switch. One Penn graduate mentioned her school focused on exposing low-income students, most of whom were Latinos(as), to corporate America. Before college, she had already worked various internships including one at a major oil corporation. The FIU graduate mentioned in the paragraph above had participated in a diversity internship program during college and shared that when her professor had recommended, that she apply, she was confused about the need for multicultural programs because *“we were all minorities.”* When she arrived at her internship at a major marketing firm in New York, she noticed she was the only Latina and the only person of color. The other interns were White and had received the internships through family connections. As she put it, *“Okay, so that's why this program*

exists. That program allowed me to break in...From there I made a lot of connections and started my career.”

All five participants who were Penn graduates came from low-income backgrounds and noted feeling out of place at various times in their college and career journeys. They were actively the minority throughout their college experience from a class, ethnic, and racial lens and mentioned their discomfort with money both in college and how it translated in their workplace. One participant made a comment that stuck with me, *“In the consulting world, the big thing now is working with these partners- who are typically white men... that way you look good, and you can advance your career. And I just found so many times that the conversations I heard my peers having with these partners are, out of the realm of things in my life. Like, ‘What's your favorite ski resort in Switzerland?’ So, I was like, how do I connect?”* She noted finding other ways to build relationships, but shared frustrations about wishing her work would speak for itself. It was not enough to make it into corporate America and be a high performer. Her wealthier peers’ social capital still provided them with leverage amongst the company partners.

The FIU participants represented a variety of lower and middle-class upbringings, with two mentioning a wealthier childhood that was shattered due to economic collapse. None of them discussed discomfort or significant ways in which money played beyond an internal driver to be financially secure. They did not comment once on how it created a disconnect with colleagues or classmates who were in a different financial class.

Conforming and Confidence in Corporate Spaces

There was one other theme that arose and weighed significantly more on one group than the other. All five FIU participants shared their experiences with

microaggressions at work and/or altering their appearance to conform, compared to only one participant from the Penn cluster. This included straightening their naturally curly hair (three), with one participant stating that a colleague had once commented that her natural hair looked “electrocuted.” This was experienced both ways, with another participant recounting her childhood neighbors referring to her as an “Oreo” (brown on the outside, white on the outside). Two participants discussed their names and how White colleagues struggled to pronounce them, one of whom mentioned an organizational leader referring to her as Beyonce in a meeting (not surprisingly, there is no similarity in spelling or pronunciation of her name to that of Beyonce). Another shared trauma from a past position where she was the only Latina “amongst a group of Taylor Swift-loving sorority girls” that deeply affected her mental health and contributed to her leaving the organization. She included speculation that her lack of “fit” contributed to being overlooked for a promotion which was later given to someone with significantly less experience than she has trained but fit the identity of the office. Acculturative stress, or the negative reaction to the inability to adapt to a more dominant culture, makes it more difficult and less likely to optimize career performance (Cruz & Blancero, 2017).

However, even with all these experiences, four of the study participants (Penn: 1, FIU: 3) did not appear frustrated about being a minority in White-dominated spaces. *“I am used to being the only Hispanic. It doesn’t bother me.”* These statements were being said by the same individuals who spent years being called by the wrong name and being assigned as the unofficial representative for the warehouse division because they could “speak their language.” These phenomena may be explained through evidence that when

Latinas(os) encounter ethnic-related stressors, they may create cognitive buffers or blinders to help them cope with the negative effects (Hakak et al., 2010).

A more positive shift in the collective narrative was the confidence to own their identity and physical appearance tied to it. Multiple participants spoke about confidence being the key factor in bringing their full selves to work. Interestingly, confidence fell into two different categories. The first was around appearance. Those who began seeing themselves represented in leadership and worked on more diverse teams contributed that as the catalyst for beginning to present as their authentic selves at work—the embraced their natural hair, wore the clothes they felt confident in, and planning heritage activities. Those who discussed confidence in utilizing their lived experience as an asset noted developing that confidence after having to articulate their narrative repeatedly. For example, one participant works in commercial real estate and focused on how her low-income background is directly tied to a passion project she successfully pitched at work for affordable housing. Commercial real estate is not in the business of affordable housing, but her passion and work ethic sold the pitch to senior leadership. She contributed her confidence to her time as a student leader in college, where she frequently shared her story to advocate to university administrators so they would expand resources for highly aided students.

The Underlying Family Factor

Many Latinos(as) choose a college close to home due to their desire to remain near family or because of ongoing familial obligations and responsibilities (Carnevale & Fasules, 2017). This was the case for my study, with most participants (8) sharing that closeness to family factored into their college and career decisions. Most participants did

this willingly, to avoid a financial burden on themselves or their parents. Across the board, all participants benefited from varying levels of autonomy that they contributed to their parents' lack of knowledge around higher education and corporate America. More so, their families pushed the concept of "office work," what was assumed to be a corporate job that provided stability. In the case of the participant working in commercial real estate, she shared an anecdote of explaining to her parents that she was not going to be a real estate agent that was selling homes. They were concerned about the job's stability and why she had moved across the country for college to become a realtor.

I want to point out that while family was a heavy influencer of most participants' pasts, very little was discussed about family in the present or future terms. Two participants mentioned they were newlyweds, one of whom hoped to start a family soon. Beyond that, only one other participant mentioned envisioning herself with a family in the future. Even so, it was brief and in the context of wanting to provide pro-bono consulting to Latina small business owners but needing a dual income to make that leap (and so she would probably wait until she had an established family to do so). While I found it very interesting, I did not directly ask about their goals and hopes for marriage or children and therefore cannot speculate on what the lack of information from participants might mean. It does support the data showing that Latinas, specifically millennials, are increasingly deferring marriage and having children to focus on their education and career goals (Telemundo, 2019).

Making Money and an Impact

Latinos are very family and community-oriented and by extension, tend to focus more energy and effort on the greater good; beyond themselves, they consider how they

can improve the conditions for their families and local communities (Karsten & Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2016). This was certainly true for half of the study participants who directly tied their professional ambitions to the concept of a greater good. The five who spoke of this dove into their goal of building personal wealth— the phrase “I need to make money” came up with each of them. The other half of the participants spoke of their career goals but did not explicitly state their focus on financial success. Those who had loftier financial goals were also the participants focused on long-term careers that would make a positive impact on their communities or support their families. The FIU graduate working in technology had recently purchased a home for her parents under her name, while the Penn graduate in consulting shared her ultimate goal of utilizing technology to enhance access to quality healthcare for vulnerable communities like the one, she came from. Three of these participants also had the highest-ranking score when asked to rate their satisfaction in corporate America.

Karsten & Bonilla-Rodriguez (2017) highlight a newer term to describe the beliefs, behaviors, and mentality of Latinas—*modern marianismo*. This riff off the word marianism, which describes perfect female characteristics, translates to Latinas as caring, nurturing, and advocating for others, all while playing a significant role in the labor force. The word modern is added because alone, marianismo is the counterpart to machismo, the mentality that Latino men are the breadwinners and powerful providers who “run” the home. In today’s world, Latinas hold their own and are equally as ambitious, all while thinking of the greater good. The participants of my study exemplified this concept.

Conclusion

Collectively, the average score of satisfaction with their experience in corporate America was higher for Penn graduates (Penn: 7.4, FIU: 6.2). The highest score amongst the FIU graduates was from the participant who benefited from a multicultural internship pipeline program. This aligns with research that shows Latinas(os) who can maintain strong connections with both their ethnic and mainstream communities are less likely to encounter isolation or alienation stressors that often come from being the only, or one of the few, Latinas in their professional organizations (Cruz & Blancero, 2017). In most of my conversations (8), participants expressed gratitude for my study's theme. They thanked me for focusing on a topic they rarely read about or heard was being spoken about. They felt seen. It was clear that the participants were not only the minority within their organizations, but they actively recognized the lack of conversations occurring regarding Latinas in corporate America.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter utilizes the themes from the data shared in Chapter 4 to provide recommendations on how to better Latinas working or aspiring to work in corporate America. Did my research provide an answer to my research question: are there cultural implications that impact the early career development of Latinas who are first-generation college graduates? Yes, I believe it did. Latinas are layered and multi-dimensional, and my sample was very representative of this. As we do into our discussions, the various layers– first-generation, immigrant parents, race, family social class, and education– all exposed nuanced experiences that played a role in their professional development and their current experiences working in corporate America. As I shared in Chapter 1, there were three underlying questions that I aimed to answer as I explored my hypothesis. I utilize them here as a guide for recommendations.

In retrospect, how does this group of Latinas working in corporate America perceive their respective upbringings as impactful on their college and early career choices?

Financial class and exposure to both wealth and White spaces was the overwhelming theme in the answer to this question. The ability to code-switch, almost entirely through SES and pipeline programs, was the constant factor in the participants who looked back on the experiences that influenced their upward mobility with positivity. For some of them, it was also what disconnected them from their Latina heritage and identity, not by choice, but by isolation from their peers who deemed them too White, too wealthy, or too mainstream. Additionally, the mentality of independence and self-advocacy did connect to the obstacles they (including their families) overcame.

This included moving across town to access better public schools, parents giving up bedrooms so the child in prep school would have their own room to study, and even taking on major financial responsibilities to support the family. Growing up gave them grit and resiliency that translated into a certain need for survival and “nobody will help you but yourself” mantra.

Another observation I made was around storytelling. There was a specific cluster of participants who knew how to articulate their story and connect the dots into compact, powerful statements about their identity, their work ethic, and their ambition. Those who were exposed to resources that made their circumstances obvious (i.e., growing up poor) were able to speak more confidently, eloquently, and positively about their overall experience, which aligned with the purpose of the Cerezo et al. LEEP pilot (2013). It reminded me of a blog post I recently read:

“Code-switching is beautiful because it allows you to hold onto two things, versus letting go of one or the other,” she told me. “I recognize there’s oppression in that I’m expected to act or speak in a different way from who I really am. But, in a way, I’m taking language and quilting with it. I’m bringing strands together into something even more meaningful. Code-switching is a way of claiming your identities, of putting a stake in the ground and saying, I’m not this one thing.” (Pride, 2022)

Managers within corporate organizations, especially those that work in spaces of extreme wealth, should be mindful of sociodemographic norms of workplace. Depending on upbringing and exposure, a staff member’s inability to code-switch can lead to isolation or feeling “othered” and in turn, lower productivity (Cruz & Blancero, 2017). I believe it is not enough to have mentorship programs. Latinas will face the same issues they did as first-generation college students— they broke through and made it but now they’re expected to thrive without the same capital of their peers. Recognizing unofficial

systems that create pathways for those with privilege, and actively working to dismantle them is a necessity for organizations who prioritize DEI and look to welcome this growing workforce.

What social, academic, and professional resources did they/are utilizing to support their career development?

I was fascinated to see how passive resources like online forums and apps were utilized in comparison to more active resources, such as mentors or ERGs. When considering contemporary factors that signal upward mobility in careers, we think of promotions and salaries. These are undisputable markers of “moving up” in one’s career. When participants spoke about seeking out this information or similar guidance, they mentioned public and anonymous forums where industry folks, not peers or mentors, were sharing information that helped them negotiate their own compensation packages. They were not seeking out one-on-one coaching or in-person conversations with individuals or groups. However, mentors they met along the way, whether past supervisors, professors, or pairings facilitated by pipeline programs, were referenced as a more holistic professional resource.

“Overcoming stressors such as those noted requires a strong will, determination, a supportive network, and willingness to access education, training, and mentors, among other things.” (Karsten & Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2016, P. 350)

Participants were seeking out information online, but the relationships they were forming were by happenstance. They did not mention seeking out mentors or face-to-face opportunities for connection and guidance. As one participant said to me, “You know how it is with Latinos. We are proud and don’t like to ask for help.” Organizations cannot simply organize an ERG or mentorship program; they must facilitate the initial

conversations to break through cultural assumptions that this is help. Latinas may not realize their peers are having these same conversations, they're simply having them across the dinner table.

How do traditional Latino(a) gender norms play a role in their decision-making and advocating/negotiations at work?

Simply put, representation matters. When participants reflected on scenarios where they whitewashed themselves to better acculturate or put up with microaggressions by their colleagues, the story usually followed with the fact that they had been the only Latina or person of color. Their stories of confidence and bringing their authentic selves to work were inspired by seeing people in positions of power that looked like them. I want to stress the phrase looked like them. It is not enough to say there is Latina representation. Are there Afro-Latinas? Are there individuals with varied skin tones and hair textures? Are there employees who speak with an accent or have a non-Eurocentric name? Are the varied ways that make up their identities being represented elsewhere in the organization?

In regard to gender playing a role in self-advocacy and negotiations, having avenues to crowd source information from women, Latinas or otherwise, was important and a common resource tapped by participants. How can organizations provide these forums where knowledge-sharing can take place? These forums exist throughout various social media platforms for a plethora of industries. Workers are going to seek out this information and company-sponsored spaces can send a message that the organization truly values creating an equitable environment.

The most powerful trait of all is that of modern marianismo. Latinas are ready to make an impact in the workforce and will do so by carving out a unique niche for themselves. It is up to organizations to recognize this shift in Latino(a) culture, especially around the concept of the greater good. The better a company can market its values and corporate responsibility statement to Latinas, especially those aligned with their own values, the stronger their recruitment strategy will be.

Final Thoughts

Originally, I aimed to write these recommendations for corporations, to better prepare them as they work to recruit, retain, develop and hopefully, reward, one of the largest demographics entering the workforce. However, from my conversations came a new enlightenment. As a Latina who has had the privilege of navigating and accessing resources that have educated me and exposed me to the corporate mainstream, these interviews made me realize something— we are not alone, and we must use the power of our lived experiences to carve a path for those who come after us. Latinas might feel like nobody will advocate for us but ourselves, but I found every conversation as an opportunity for my own personal growth. If I can gain that from 45-minute conversations, imagine what Latinas can gain from exposure to our collective, lived experiences. And so, I hope this chapter and my study’s findings not only inform those who will be working with Latinas, but that it also serves as a source of knowledge for Latinas themselves. It is in this collective wisdom that Latinas can carve out a place for themselves in corporate America that feels supportive, accessible, and achievable. Many Latinas are working hard to be the “first” for their families and communities. Research such as this can ensure they are not the last.

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APPENDIX

Screener Survey

My name is Andrea Alhadari Patton and I am a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania in the Organizational Dynamics. To fulfill my program requirements, I am completing my capstone research project on the early career development and upward mobility of young Latinas entry-level and junior roles. For the purpose of my study, Latinas are defined as women from Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, one must have at least one parent born in a Spanish-speaking country in Latin America that is considered a social and numerical minority in the United States (have a marginalized status relative to non-Hispanic whites). I am particularly interested in Latinas who are the first-generation in their family to attain a college degree and how that experience differs among those who attended an elite, private university and those who attended a Hispanic-Serving institution. I am interested in learning how demographics and representation within the college experience, coupled with the resources and support services offered may have different impacts on the development of its graduates.

The goal of this research is to acquire a deeper understanding of how shared elements of Latino identity (including ethnicity, race, class, and gender norms) present unique strengths and/or barriers for young, Latina professionals. Latinas are one of the fastest growing populations entering college and the United States workforce (Gamboa & Acevedo, 2021). Understanding the nuances of the culture and its potential effects on young Latina professional growth and social mobility is critical to developing substantive DE&I programs in organizations and other professional spaces to enable young Latinas navigate corporate careers and strengthen the recruitment and retention of Latinas in 21st century corporate America.

For this part of my study, I am administering a 10-minute survey to gather general demographic and background information. The survey does not require you to disclose any aspect of your personal identity or that of your employer and organization you work for. Should you choose to disclose any identifying information about yourself or your employer in your responses to open-ended questions, this identifying information will not be referred to in any way during the course of my research.

Those who fit the criteria of the study may be asked to conduct a follow-up interview with me through Zoom. Should you agree to participate in an interview, the interview will be confidential and last no more than 30-45 minutes.

To participate in this study you must fit the following criteria:

- Identify as a Latina (at least one parent identifies as a Latino)
- Identify as a woman
- Are a Millennial (born 1980-1995)
- Identify as second-generational American (you were born in the United States; at least one parent was born abroad in their home country)
- You are a first-generation college graduate (your parents did not attend and/or complete a degree from a four-year degree granting institution)
- Have graduated from University of Pennsylvania or Florida International University with your bachelor's degree (between 2013-2018)
- Are actively working full-time with at least 3-5 years into your career post-graduation

I will be completing this research under the guidance of Dr. Kimberly Torres at the University of Pennsylvania. Professor Torres is a faculty member in the Organizational Dynamics program.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please feel free to email me at alhadari@upenn.edu.

Thank you for your participation. Your contribution to this research study is truly appreciated.

2. Participant Consent Form (Mandatory Question)

By consenting to be part of this research, you agree to participate in a 10-minute demographic survey. This is a research study; therefore, there will be no direct benefits to you from participation in the study.

There are minimal risks to you from taking part in this survey. The risk is accidental disclosure of private information. However, every effort will be made, within the limits of the law, to safeguard the confidentiality of the information you provide. No one other than myself, Andrea Alhadari Patton, will know your identity. No identifying information related to respondents will be referenced at any point in time throughout the course of this research. Should I plan to continue this study at a later date, the data from this research will be de-identified, and could be stored and distributed for future research.

Withdrawal: You may choose not to answer any question that you do not want to answer and are free to terminate the survey at any time. Should you decide to terminate your survey and/or involvement in this study, I will destroy all related information, including written notes. You will not be linked to my research in any way thereafter.

Confidentiality: No one, except the Student Researcher, Andrea Alhadari Patton, will know respondents' true identities. You understand that all information collected in this study will be kept strictly confidential, except as may be required by law. Consent forms will be kept in a secure location; I am the only person who will have access to this information. Because of the confidential nature of the research, there will be no witness to consent procedures.

Subject Rights: If you wish to have further information regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Director of Regulatory Affairs at the University of Pennsylvania by telephoning 215-898-2614. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction. You have read and understood the consent form. Select "I consent to participate in this study" if you agree to participate in this research study.

- a. I consent to participate in this study (*Continue Survey*)
- b. I do not consent to participate in this study and want to terminate the survey (*Terminate Survey*)

3. What is the highest degree of education your parents have received?

- a. High school education (one parent)
- b. High school education (both parents)
- c. Associate's degree (one parent)
- d. Associate's degree (both parents)
- e. Other (Specify)_____

4. Were your parents born outside of the United States? *To participate in the survey, at least one parent must have been born abroad.*

- a. One parent born abroad, one parent born in the United States.
- b. Both parents born abroad

5. <IF Question 4 = A or B> Where was your mother born?

<FREE FORM FIELD>

6. <IF Question 4 = A or B> Where was your father born?

<FREE FORM FIELD>

7. Describe your family composition while growing up (i.e., single parent household, other guardian, younger siblings, stay-at-home parent). Please list the people who lived in your household before you went to college.

<FREE FORM FIELD>

8. How do you identify ethnically?

<FREE FORM FIELD>

9. How do you define yourself racially?

<FREE FORM FIELD>

10. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the lightest and 5 being the darkest, how would you describe your skin tone?

- a. 1 very light
- b. 2
- c. 3
- d. 4
- e. 5 very dark

11. What institution did you receive your Bachelor's degree from? *To participate in the survey, you must be a graduate from one of the options below.*

- a. Florida International University
- b. University of Pennsylvania

12. Have you pursued additional higher education after graduating with your Bachelor's degree?

<FREE FORM FIELD>

13. What was your degree in? Please include any majors and minors.

<FREE FORM FIELD>

14. Did you receive financial aid in order to attend college?

- a. Yes
- b. No

<If Question 14 = A, go to question 14b>

14b. Which of the following choices best represents your financial aid (need-based aid such as scholarship, grants, and loans) situation when pursuing your college degree?

- a. I was a fully-aided student
- b. I relied on financial aid for at least half of my cost of attendance
- c. I received financial aid, but it covered less than half of my cost of attendance
- d. I did not require financial aid to pursue my degree
- e. I received private scholarships that were awarded outside of the university

15. How would you describe the racial and ethnic composition of your neighborhood while growing up?

- a. Predominantly White (more than 70% white)
- b. Predominantly Hispanic/Latino (more than 70%)
- c. Predominantly Black (more than 70%)
- d. Racially and ethnically integrated (at least 50% Asian, Black and Hispanic/Latino)
- e. Other (Specify) _____

16. To the best of your knowledge, what was your family's household income when you were growing up?

- a. Less than \$26,999
- b. \$27,000 to \$74,999
- c. \$75,000 to \$124,999

- d. Greater than \$125,000
- e. Unsure

17. What type of high school did you graduate from?

- a. Public school
- b. Private school (Parochial, religiously-based)
- c. Private school (Secular, not religiously-based)
- d. Charter school (independently-run public schools)
- e. Magnet school (SAA)
- f. Homeschool
- g. Other (Specify)_____

18. What is your current job title?

<FREE FORM FIELD>

19. How long have you worked for your current employer? Please specify the number of months/years.

<FREE FORM FIELD>

20. What industry do you work in (please also specify the number of years you have worked in this industry)?

<FREE FORM FIELD>

21. Thank you for participating in the survey. If you would like to be considered for the interview portion of this study, please enter your name and email address.

<FREE FORM FIELD>

Interview Guide

Section I: Introduction

To begin, would you mind telling me a little bit about yourself?

Section II: Family Background & Formative Years

Now if you could tell me a little bit about your family. What do your parents do for a living? (i.e. How long have they been at their respective jobs? Are they retired?)

How would you classify your family's social class background when you were growing up? (Probe: details about financial situation, neighborhood quality, what people did for a living, homeownership, neighborhood friends)

Tell me about your school years before college. What were these experiences like? Did you ever feel different because of your racial/ethnic identities? (Probe: Ask about Spanish proficiency and accents) How so? What made you feel that way?

How would you describe your friend group growing up in terms of racial/ethnic diversity? (Probe: ask about the financial situation/social class of friends' families) What about their closest friends in high school?

What kinds of activities or extracurriculars did you participate in and outside of high school? If so, which ones? (Probe: If not, was there a reason why? Were any of these activities identity-based or specifically for Latino people and/or girls/women?)

Section III: College Years

What factors influenced your decision to attend college? Did you speak with anyone that influenced your decision to attend your University? (Probe: did they have a college degree?)

What type of guidance or involvement did your family have as you navigated college? (Probe: How did you pick your major? Did your family have input on these decisions?)

In retrospect, how do you feel about your college experience overall (academically & socially)? How about compared to your high school experience? (Probe: Did you have an idea of what you wanted to do career-wise/professionally? Probe: What was your friend group in college in terms of racial/ethnic/class/gender diversity? Were any of them Latino people and/or girls/women?)

Section IV: Career Path Decisions

What drew you to your current organization and your role? As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? Does your current role align with that? (Probe: How did your college degree influence your career path and the role you're currently in? In what ways? How so?)

Tell me about your experience applying and interviewing for the role you currently have. (Probe: How did you prepare? If they did not prepare, why not?)

Do you have someone (family, friends, or mentors) that helped you navigate your job application and negotiation process? If yes, what is their career?

Section V: Perceptions of Racial & Ethnic Climate

How would you describe the culture and values of your organization? (Probe: Does it feel inclusive, and accepting for new employees? Probe: Tell me about attire and hairstyles—can people express themselves in this way? How so?)

Would you describe your office population as diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, and gender? How about in your immediate team? (If the answer is not diverse, Probe: What is that experience like for you?)

Do you ever go to lunch or grab coffee with your colleagues? If so, how did you get to know them? (Probe: Are there any Latinas or other minorities? How did you meet them? Do they act as a support system in any way?)

Tell me about the gender/ethnic/racial makeup of senior leadership. Can you describe them to me? (Probe: Do you have mentors/role models that encourage you professionally? Are any Latinas?)

Section VI: Professional Development

What does a typical work week look like for you? Could you walk me through a typical day? What do you enjoy about it?

What do you think about the coaching and professional development available to you through work? What is most valuable? What do you think could be improved? What makes you say that?

Where do you see yourself in five years professionally and otherwise?

How often do you receive formal feedback from your manager or other office leaders? Is it mandated or voluntary? What is that experience like for you? How do you feel about that feedback and your performance overall?

Have you ever felt as if any aspect of your career trajectory was impacted by any part of your identity? When I say identity I mean ethnicity, skin color, or your social/financial class. What makes you say that?

Section VII: Workplace Engagement

Do you participate in any social organizations or functions at work? If so, which ones? If you don't, what factors may impact your decision not to participate? What are these experiences like for you? (Probe: How would you describe your relationship with your team?)

Do you ever socialize with any of your colleagues outside of work? How do you feel about doing this? I would ask if they socialize with folks regularly and how they met them? Probe: Do you feel you have to do this to get ahead? Then probe, if not, why?

Do you participate in any professional organizations inside and/or outside of work? What kinds of organizations are they? (If yes, Probe: How did you get involved? What factors encouraged you to participate or engage?)

Do you participate in any activities or events for your professional development? (Probe: Are these organizations for Latinos and other racial/ethnic minorities? What do you think of them?)

Conclusion

How has COVID-19 impacted your organization? What about your own work?

What about the Black Lives Matter movement? (Probe: did the racial and social justice protests have an influence on your company or your team?)

Lastly, how would you rate your experience in corporate America overall (On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the worst experience and 10 being the best experience), specific to your current role and organization? Professionally? Socially? What makes you give those ratings?

Thank you for your participation, it is greatly appreciated. Is there anything else you would like to add?

If there's anything else you would like to talk about, please feel free to contact me via email or phone. Email: alhadari@upenn.edu.

If you know of anyone else who would like to participate, please feel free to share my email address.