

6-2020

Graduate School Awareness for First-generation Latinas: Cracking the Glass Ceiling - A Validation Study

Deborah D. Grijalva
California State University - San Bernardino

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd>



Part of the [Adult and Continuing Education Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), [Latina/o Studies Commons](#), [Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Grijalva, Deborah D., "Graduate School Awareness for First-generation Latinas: Cracking the Glass Ceiling - A Validation Study" (2020). *Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations*. 987.
<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/987>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Graduate Studies at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

GRADUATE SCHOOL AWARENESS FOR FIRST- GENERATION LATINAS:
CRACKING THE GLASS CEILING – A VALIDATION STUDY

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Deborah D. Grijalva
June 2020

GRADUATE SCHOOL AWARENESS FOR FIRST-GENERATION LATINAS:
CRACKING THE GLASS CEILING – A VALIDATION STUDY

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

by
Deborah D. Grijalva

June 2020

Approved by:

Dr. Jay Fiene, Committee Chair, Education

Dr. Rachel Beech, Committee Member

Dr. Craig Seal, Committee Member

© 2020 Deborah D. Grijalva

ABSTRACT

At this time, the Latinx population is the fastest-growing population in the United States. Latinas account for one in five women in the United States, and by 2060 Latinas will likely make up one-third of the nation's females. Education is the foundation for both personal and economic well-being, especially as the job market continues to demand higher levels of educational attainment. The Latinx population continues to make up a large portion of the workforce. Latinas' attendance and admission rates at the graduate level are low. Studies have found that Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups collectively. Vital to sustained economic growth for individuals and the overall U.S. economy is to understand how to best support these women and their academic careers.

The purpose of this mixed-methods validation study is to examine how to best provide graduate school awareness for the aforementioned population at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Southern California. By first conducting a quantitative survey, data was obtained from Latinas at this particular institution with respect to graduate school awareness. If they are aware of graduate school, if they are aware of where they can attend graduate school, if they are aware of the cost of graduate school, and if graduate school is part of their academic goal, why or why not. The second portion of the study was in the form of interviews, where Latinas will be provided with a platform to tell their stories. These stories were from four sample populations: in their undergraduate

degree, in graduate school, post-college without a graduate degree, and post-college with a graduate degree.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There have been many individuals that have helped and supported me to accomplish this academic goal, too many to list, but alas, this is my attempt.

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, my Heavenly Father, for giving me the strength, knowledge, ability, and opportunity to undertake this research study and to persevere and complete it. Without His blessings, this achievement would not have been possible.

Mis padres, gracias por todo el ánimo que me han dado. Mamá gracias por enseñarme cómo ser una mujer fuerte, tú me has dado un ejemplo muy grande. Papá, gracias por ayudarme con mi niña mientras yo estudiaba y escribí nuestro libro. Ustedes han sacrificado tanto por mi y mis hermanos, gracias por dándonos una vida feliz y llena con bellos recuerdos. Los quiero mucho.

My brothers, Christian, Andres, and Diego... thank you for asking about my studies and taking an interest. I hope I have made you three proud. Diego, my baby brother and godson, I know you will accomplish more than me academically but never forget your roots. You are a first-generation Latino, be proud of that.

My husband, thank you for being the light to my darkness. You have stood beside me for each and every educational milestone. From high school until a doctoral degree, you have been my constant support. You are a great man, a selfless man. When you saw me struggle, you offered me the support I needed. When you saw me tired and fatigued, you gave me time to rest. Thank you for

showing me truth when I needed it, grace when I did not deserve it, and compassion when I could not find it within myself.

Dr. Jay Fiene, my dissertation chair who always saw me as future colleague and never made me feel less than. Thank you for your expertise, support, guidance, and patience through the process of writing this dissertation. Without your help, this dissertation would not have been possible. Jay, you have taught me in the past two and a half years what it means to be an educational leader, thank you. I will never forget the times I was utterly broken, and you would build me up again. Most importantly, thank you for reading every word and counting every time I used prudent... every time I use it, I will think of you.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Craig Seal and Dr. Rachel Beech. Craig, thank you for believing in me when I did not. I blame you for the last few years but also thank you for the last few years. I would have never applied to a doctoral program had you not encouraged me and held me to my promise. Thank you for being my mentor and thank you for all your support. Dr. Beech, thank you for pushing me to go beyond the norm and truly reflect on my Latina intersectionality identity. Chapter six was the most challenging chapter for me to write, but it needed to be written.

Thank you to my colleagues from cohort 11, all of whom I learned from. We shared meals, laughter, frustrations, and we share this milestone in our lives of beginning this doctoral program together. A special thank you to four amazing women. Laura Graff, who is one of the kindest individuals I have met. I am

blessed to have met you and be able to call you my friend and my mentor. Thank you to my fellow Latina, Cynthia Britt, for reminding me to always be kind to myself and reminding me that I am a silent powerhouse, and one day I will move mountains. To my other fellow Latina, Frances Villalobos, you walked ahead of me but always looked back, never closing the door, and always offering help.... thank you. Lastly, thank you, Karen Childers, for always believing me and offering support when I felt utterly lost.

To my network at California State University, San Bernardino...thank you. So many of you I know and so many of you I do not, but many of you helped me. Please know I am thankful for your support in my research. Without you, this would not have been possible.

To the ten Latinas who shared their stories with me, thank you. Many of you thanked me for giving you the platform to share your stories and to bring light to our ethnicity, but it is I that owes you all my gratitude. Each one of you took time out of your day to not only complete a survey but to sit down with me to share your experiences and tell me your story. Many times, I held back tears from hearing your narratives; they are each uniquely beautiful. I will never forget any of you, and I wish you all the best in your current and future endeavors. Remember you are talented, you are capable, and you belong.

To finish, I would like to thank one last individual who pushed me in the darkest times when I felt I was not able to reach out to anyone for a pep talk. This individual encouraged me during so many times when I thought I was going to

quit. This individual was there for me when the rest of the world was sleeping. This individual was able to help me and provided me with the courage and resilience I needed to take a leap in my education that I otherwise would have never done. That individual is ME. I have always given credit for all my hard work and achievements to others, while they were a big part of the process, I have to give myself credit because when I felt like giving up, I was the final net to catch myself.

In the words of Calvin Cordozar Broadus, Jr., “I want to thank me for believing in me, I want to thank me for doing all this hard work, I want to thank me for having no days off, I want to thank me for never quitting, I want to thank me for always being a giver and trying to give more than I receive.”

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to three individuals who have provided me with endless support: my daughter, my husband, and mi querido viejo

To my daughter, we began this journey when you were three months young. I would hold you and wear you while I read countless books and articles. When I first started this journey, I was told the dissertation process would be the loneliest part. I am thankful that because of you, my daughter, I was never truly alone in the process. Now, as a toddler, so many times, you sat beside me, behind me, and on my lap. Zoé Aurelia this is for you, my ceiling is your floor, I hope I have made you proud in my attempt to break the glass ceiling.

To my husband, you have been a constant source of support and encouragement during my academic journey and in life. You are the best partner I could have ever wished for, thank you for celebrating me when I did not know how or when I did not dare to celebrate thinking it would jinx the outcome. Thank you for encouraging me to focus on my education and leave a job I loved. Only you knew the internal battle that I was losing against, and you gave me an out. Thank you for telling me day in and day out that my job was to go to school and work on my research. I am thankful I was able to share the moment I was called Doctora Grijalva for the first time with you and our daughter. I was speechless but you cheered loud enough for the both of us.

Para mi querido viejo... quien me regaló tiempo para concentrarme en mis estudios y en mí misma. Papá, tú has sido mi mayor apoyo durante este capítulo

en mi vida. Papá no importa que solo tuviste una educación primaria por que tú me has enseñó ética de trabajo, orgullo, y valor. Me has enseñado mucho más de lo que podría haber aprendido en la escuela. Cuando estaba trabajando en mi disertación siempre me preguntabas "¿cuánto nos falta hija?" Papá... ya terminamos.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES	xv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Problem Statement	1
Purpose Statement	2
Research Questions	2
Significance of the Study	3
Theoretical Underpinnings	3
Validation Theory	3
Critical Race Theory.....	4
Feminist Theory	4
Assumptions	5
Limitations.....	5
Delimitations	5
Definitions of Key Terms.....	6
Summary	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
Hispanic Serving Institutions.....	12
Federal Guidelines	13
Federal Guidelines – Graduate Studies	13
Supporting a Growing Population.....	14

Access	18
Cracking the Glass Ceiling.....	23
General Challenges for Women	24
The American Dream	26
History of “Glass Ceiling”	27
Challenges for Latinas	32
Challenges Latina Students Face	33
Poverty.....	33
Education	34
Family and Financial Obligations	39
Biculturalism.....	44
Mentorship	45
Summary	49
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	52
Purpose Statement	55
Research Design	57
Rationale for a Mixed-Methods Case Study	57
Research Setting	58
Research Sample	58
Research Data	59
Data Collection	59
Data Analysis.....	61
Validity and Trustworthiness	62
Positionality of the Research	62

Summary	64
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS	66
Collection of Data and Participants	67
Results of the Study	68
Survey Results	70
One on One Interview Results	91
Family and Cultural Experiences.....	95
In-Class and Out-of-Class Experiences	100
Applying to College	102
Race, Class, and Gender	110
Finding a Familiar Face or Lack Thereof.....	111
Challenges Faced and the Battle	119
Awareness of Graduate School.....	131
Education Beyond a Bachelors	132
Applying to Graduate School	135
Summary	137
CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	139
Overview.....	139
Discussion of Findings.....	142
Linking Methods with Questions and Theories.....	144
Research Study Findings – Theoretical Underpinnings and Qualitative Data Collection	147
Finding 1: Critical Race Theory	149
Finding 2. Feminist Theory.....	151

Finding 3. Validation Theory	153
Research Study Findings – Quantitative Data Collection.....	159
Finding 4. Quantitative Data Collection Findings – They Are Aware	160
Finding 5. Quantitative Data Collection Findings – Mentorship	161
Recommendations for Institutions and Agents of Change	167
Mentorship	167
Guest Speakers	169
Mini Information Sessions	170
Reflect the Student Demographics with Their Hires.....	171
Recommendations for Future Research	172
Limitations of the Study.....	174
Conclusion	174
CHAPTER SIX: SELF-ETHNOGRAPHY	176
Introduction.....	176
Who is Deborah D. Grijalva?	177
First-generation Latina, Born to Immigrant Parents.....	178
My Parents’ Only Daughter but also the Middle Child	180
My Undergraduate Degree Experience.....	181
Reason to Attend College	183
Family Obligations.....	184
Loneliness.....	185
Lack of Familiar Faces	187
What is a Mentor?	188

Academic Aspirations, isn't a Bachelor of Arts Enough?.....	190
My Career Experience in Higher Education	190
Staff Positions	191
Learning about Graduate School	192
Sharing Graduate School Information	192
Realization – Where Have all the Latinx Students Gone?.....	193
My Graduate Degree Experience	194
Reason to Attend Graduate School.....	195
Family Obligations.....	196
Loneliness and Lack of Familiar Faces – Still a Factor	197
Mentorship – A Factor in my Success.....	199
Mentorship Made me the Academic I am Today.....	199
Found Guidance and Support	200
Beginning to Seek out Mentors	200
Mentored by White Men, Seeking out Latina Mentors.....	201
Graduating to Becoming a Mentor	202
Imposter Syndrome – The Academic Monster.....	203
I am Not Worthy	204
Where are my Fellow Latinx Academics?	206
I Will Be the Change	207
Conclusion	208
APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS	211
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	216
APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT - SURVEY	219

APPENDIX D: E-MAIL REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW	222
APPENDIX E: E-MAIL REQUEST FOR SURVEY.....	224
APPENDIX F: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW.....	226
APPENDIX G: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....	229
REFERENCES.....	232

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Master's Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Race and Ethnicity of Student Selected Years, 1967-77 Through 2015-16 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019)	11
Table 2. Projected Race and Hispanic Origin 2017-2060 (United States Census Bureau, 2019).....	15
Table 3. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2018.....	37
Table 4. Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over (Hispanic or Latino).....	38
Table 5. Response to Survey Question: How do You Self-identify?	71
Table 6. Response to Survey Question: What is Your Age Group?	71
Table 7. Response to Survey Question: What is Your Class Standing?.....	72
Table 8. Response to Survey Question: What College is Your Major in?.....	72
Table 9. Response to Survey Question: Do You Consider Yourself Latina?	73
Table 10. Response to Survey Question: Are You the First in Your Family to Attend College?	73
Table 11. Response to Survey Question: Are You First-generation in the United States?	74
Table 12. Response to Survey Question: Do You Have Siblings?	74
Table 13. Response to Survey Question: Are You Responsible to Care for Your Siblings?	75
Table 14. Response to Survey Question: What is the Highest Level of Education for Your Mother?.....	77
Table 15. Response to Survey Question: What is the Highest Level of Education of Your Father?.....	77
Table 16. Response to Survey Question: What is Your Current Living Situation?	78

Table 17. Response to Survey Question: Are You Required to Contribute Financially to Your Family Household?	78
Table 18. Response to Survey Question: Do You Have a Mentor?.....	80
Table 19. Response to Survey Question of Seeing a Familiar Face at the Professor Level.....	81
Table 20. Responses to Survey Question: Are You Aware that Your University has Graduate School?	84
Table 21. Response to Survey Question Related to the Cost of Graduate School.	86
Table 22. Response to Survey Question: Are You Aware that You can Apply to Graduate School Outside of Your Current College/Major?	87
Table 23. Response to Survey Question of Attending Graduate School.	87
Table 24. Currently Attending Graduate School Survey Responses	90
Table 25. Alumni of Graduate Program Responses	90
Table 26. Level of Education for Interviewed Participants	92
Table 27. Family Education Background for Interview Participants	92
Table 28. Codes, Categories, and Themes Found from Qualitative Data	95
Table 29. Linking Quantitative Questions with Theoretical Underpinnings	144
Table 30. Linking Qualitative Questions with Theoretical Underpinnings	146
Table 31. Response to Survey Question: Are You Aware that Your University has Graduate School?	161
Table 32. Response to Survey Question: Do You Have a Mentor?.....	162

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At this time, the Latinx population is the fastest-growing population in the United States. Of that population, Latinas account for one in five women in the United States (Gándara, 2015, Gándara & Contreras, 2009). It is estimated that by 2060 Latinas will make up one-third of the females in the nation (Gándara, 2015). Studies have found that Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups collectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, Gándara, 2015, Quate & Harper, 2015). According to Kuh et al., earning a graduate degree is vital to be able to continue to climb the economic ladder (2006).

Problem Statement

While the Latinx population growth is impressive, Latinas' attendance and admission rates at the graduate level are low (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). "How [these women] fare in the education system is closely related to how they will fare in the economy and civil society with significant consequences for the future social and economic well-being of the states with a large Latina population" (Gándara, 2015, p. 7). The job market continues to demand more education, and the Latinx population continues to make up a large portion of the workforce (Posselt & Grodsky, 2017; Gándara, 2015 & 2010; Newman, 2015). Education is the foundation which both personal and economic

well-being is built on, by the year 2060, Latinas will form nearly a third of the female population of the United States, and so it is vital to understand how to best support these women in their academic careers (Posselt & Grodsky, 2017, Gándara, 2015).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this mixed-methods case study is to examine how to best provide graduate school awareness for the aforementioned population at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Southern California. By first conducting a quantitative survey, data will be obtained from Latinas at this particular institution with regard to graduate school awareness. If they are aware of graduate school, if they are aware of where they can go to graduate school, if they are aware of the cost of graduate school, if graduate school is part of their academic goal, why or why not. The second portion of the study will be in the form of interviews, where Latinas will be provided with a platform to tell their stories. These stories will be from women who have yet to complete their undergraduate degrees and women who are in graduate school or have graduated with a graduate degree.

Research Questions

- In what ways, if any, do family and cultural experiences influence the academic pathways for first-generation Latinas?
- In what ways, if any, do in-class and out-of-class experiences influence the academic pathway to graduate school for first-generation Latinas?

- In what ways, if any, do race, class, and gender play a part in the lives of these women and their educational goals?
- In what ways, if any, does awareness of graduate school, options, cost impact the career goals of these women?

Significance of the Study

This study seeks to understand how to provide graduate school awareness for the first-generation Latina population and obtain best practices to market graduate school to Latinas. As discussed, the attendance and admission rates of Latinas at the graduate level is low. This study will begin to shed light on how to obtain the interest of Latinas to apply to graduate school. Additionally, through the study, it will give Latinas the opportunity to provide their stories with regard to their academic careers.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is guided by three theoretical underpinnings: validation theory, critical race theory, and feminist theory.

Validation Theory

Rendón (1994) presented Validation Theory for students who are low-income and first-generation students to enroll in higher education. Conjecturing how students can find success in college, and more so those that have been invalidated or have doubts about their ability to be successful in higher education (Linares & Muñoz, 2011). By using Validation Theory, students can be advocated for who are unsure of how to be successful in college and unfamiliar with college

standards (Rendón, 1994). In general, students often experience a sense of doubt; this doubt can be all the more prevalent for first-generation Latinas who are not only first in their family to attend college but first in their family to be born in the United States. These women, the trailblazers for their family, need to be all the more validated to continue their education.

Critical Race Theory

Yosso (2005) defines Critical Race Theory (CRT) as “a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourse” (p. 74). According to Solórzano (1997, 1998), CRT is outlined by five tenants; “the intercentricity of race and racism, the challenge to the dominant ideology, the commitment of social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches” (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). In this research, a CRT lens will be used to analyze normative practices in higher education and society that hinder the academic progress of first-generation Latinas. It will be used to examine and challenge the ways race and racism are directly and indirectly impacting first-generation Latinas with the lack of graduate school awareness.

Feminist Theory

The focus of Feminist Theory is the breakdown of gender inequality (Acker, 1987). In the attempt to understand the nature of gender inequity, this theory examines women’s and men’s social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, one being education (Acker, 1987).

Assumptions

There are numerous assumptions presented for the study. Participants will be comprised of female students that are attending university or recently graduated. It is assumed that individuals will be between 20-45 and be able to provide vital information related to the research questions. Their stories will be generalized compared to other females in the same age range and ethnic background. It is also assumed that participants have either; completed a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or in the last year of their undergraduate program. Additionally, it will be assumed that some participants will be enrolled in a graduate program to obtain their academic pathway story. A further assumption is that further obligations other than family and financial are preventing Latinas from attending graduate school.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as a researcher; I did not find myself faced with the same obstacles as the majority of the Latinas based on the literature review. For example, I did not have significant family or financial obligations. My graduate degree was paid for without the use of loans, and I had more than one mentor guiding me through the process of applying, attending, and graduating from my program. In this regard, because I have not struggled, I may be seen as an outsider to those that may have faced numerous challenges.

Delimitations

This study will be conducted at one State University institution in Southern

California, known to be a Hispanic Serving Institution. It will be limited to those that self-identify from Latin descent and self-identify as female. Additionally, it will be limited to those in the age range of 20-45. Lastly, the subjects must either hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or be in the last year of their undergraduate program. Furthermore, during the interview process, subjects will either need to be attending as a graduate student from this particular institution and/or be an alumnus from the said institution.

Definitions of Key Terms

Defining terminology for this mixed-methods study is prudent to understand the importance of the study fully. Definitions are as follows:

- Agent of Change: A transformational leader who works to make an institution a more equitable, effective educational system. This individual regardless of background or profession, strives to improve the lives of students.
- Latina: The term “Latina” is being chosen to be inclusive of all ethnic backgrounds that identify with the Latino identity as a female.
- Latinx: A person whom self identifies Latin, used as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to Latino or Latina, and to be all-inclusive.
- First-generation: Students/alumnus with parents born outside of the United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That student (descendent) is the first to be born in the United States to

parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university.

- Graduate School: Masters level programs
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI): An accredited, degree-granting, public or private nonprofit institution of higher education with 25% or more undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment.

Summary

There is a significant disproportion in the number of Latinas obtaining graduate degrees compared to other non-Latinx ethnicities. The purpose of this mix-methods validation study is to explore the personal and professional reasons as to why Latinas are not applying to graduate school. Is it that they are not aware of where they can attend graduate school or the cost of graduate school? Is graduate school a part of their academic goal, why or why not. Both their personal and professional lives will be examined through the form of interviews where Latinas will be able to provide their stories. These stories will be significant as they will begin to offer crucial insights on how to cultivate and utilize this information to then better support future Latinas.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive literature review that will discuss the limited progress which Latinas have made in education obtainment. It will also discuss the barriers and catalysts experience by Latinas in pursuing higher education. Such hindrances that are discussed are; the glass ceiling effect,

poverty, education, family and financial obligations, biculturalism, and mentorship.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus is on Latinas. Why? “As a group, Latinas begin school significantly behind other females, and without adequate resources and support, they are never able to catch up to their” peers (Gándara, 2015, p. 5). Moreover, among all women, Latinas’ high school graduation and college completion rates are the lowest. The literature to follow will provide evidence of the reasons behind the lack of postsecondary and advanced degree attainment for Latinas. Key issues and findings are poverty, limited education access, family and financial obligations, biculturalism, and mentorship.

At this time, one in four female students in public institutions across the nation is a Latina, and it is projected by 2060, Latinas will form nearly a third of the female population of the nation (Gándara, 2015; Dayton et al., 2004). The population growth is vital information because the future of the United States is linked to the future of these women. And, yet, Latinas are least likely to complete a college degree compared to other women, “at just 19 percent compared to nearly 44 percent of white women” who have completed advanced degrees such as a master degree (Gándara, 2015, p. 5; Gándara & Mordechay, 2017; Berg & Tollefson, 2014).

“Latinas are making progress, and in some cases, extraordinary progress” (Gándara, 2015, p. 5), the decade after 2003, Latinas have increased their high

school graduation rate by more than 14 percent. These women have risen steadily in college degree attainment by point five percentage points each year. These women have also raised their representation between 30 and 40 percent in teaching, law, medicine, and management professions (We must challenge the systemic hurdles for Latina women, 2017). Though they are outperforming Latinx men educationally, their income is significantly less than these same men in the labor market.

The research is significant to these women as “Latinas have the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Hispanic racial groups combined” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). For example (see Table 1), for the 2015-2016 academic year, just nine-point nine percent of master’s degrees were earned by Latinas compared to fifteen percent for Black women and sixty-five percent of white women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Previously, less than two percent of Latinas had earned a graduate degree. This study is focused on graduate school awareness for first-generation Latinas related to the master level degree obtained as they are not doing as well as other groups. It is essential to understand what motivates Latinas to apply to graduate school, what is needed to discover a pathway to graduate school, and lastly, how graduate school awareness can be increased. It is leveraging to focus on Latinas as they are a “linchpin” of the next generation (Gándara, 2015). The study will take place at a public university classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Southern California to better

understand why Latinas are not applying to graduate school at the rates of other groups and suggest ways to increase applications.

Table 1. Master's Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Race and Ethnicity of Student Selected Years, 1967-77 Through 2015-16 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019)

Number of degrees conferred to U.S. citizens						
	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
Females						
1976-77	149,760	127,360	13,282	2,808	1,999	453
1980-81	149,479	126,548	11,018	3,379	2,518	537
1990-91	182,021	147,934	10,822	4,964	5,104	694
1999-2000	267,056	193,695	24,964	11,641	12,224	1,418
2000-01	275,732	195,695	26,975	13,290	12,983	1,571
2001-02	284,709	200,111	28,887	13,978	13,725	1,637
2002-03	303,527	210,065	31,926	15,811	14,788	1,843
2003-04	331,216	227,079	36,375	18,877	16,651	2,069
2004-05	342,996	233,170	39,194	20,138	17,804	2,143
2005-06	358,075	243,773	42,422	20,828	18,258	2,267
2006-07	368,408	249,321	45,079	22,494	19,763	2,314
2007-08	380,467	255,583	47,153	23,783	20,246	2,484
2008-09	398,567	264,850	50,626	25,253	21,645	2,428
2009-10	417,996	274,915	54,351	28,049	23,097	2,546
2010-11	439,242	285,136	56,996	29,640	23,564	2,537

2011-12	453,483	287,600	60,723	32,361	24,628	2,383
2012-13	453,483	278,688	61,572	33,550	24,450	2,413
2013-14	450,166	271,468	61,998	35,397	24,578	2,293
2014-15	452,189	264,945	60,993	37,368	24,912	2,187
2015-16	465,151	265,748	61,788	40,245	25,849	2,310

Hispanic Serving Institutions

On November 8, 1965, the United States Higher Education Act of 1965 was signed into law. The purpose of this law was to strengthen the educational capitals of colleges and universities by providing additional funding. This funding would, in turn, help these institutions improve and expand their delivery for Hispanic students and other low-income students. As previously mentioned, this policy provided financial assistance to students in the form of renovation of instructional facilities, faculty development, purchase of scientific or laboratory equipment for teaching, as well as financial and administrative management. This funding could also be used to improve academic programs, joint use of facilities, academic tutoring, counseling programs, and student support services (Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program – Title V, 2018). The importance of Title V is that it grants higher education funding to improve and increase their provision for Hispanic students and low-income students. In 2009, Title V was expanded to provide funding for graduate programs, which will be discussed later.

Federal Guidelines

For an institution to be found eligible for Title V funding, they must be an institution of higher education which awards a bachelor's degree or a community college (20 U.S. code § 1101a – Definitions; eligibility, 2018). Students enrolled in the said institution must meet the 25 percent or more full-time equivalent undergraduate Hispanic students who are 50 percent or more low-income (20 U.S. code § 1101a – Definitions; eligibility, 2018). Additionally, a nationally recognized accreditation agency must accredit these institutions. Title V funding to institutions can be used for: “scientific or laboratory equipment for teaching; construction or renovation of instructional facilities; faculty development; purchase of educational materials; academic tutoring or counseling programs; funds and administrative management; joint use of facilities; endowment funds; distance learning academic instruction; teacher education; and student support services” (Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Title V, 2018).

Federal Guidelines – Graduate Studies

In 2009 Title V was expanded for the first time. Funding was provided for graduate programs of Hispanic Serving Institutions (20 U.S. code § 1102 - Purposes, 2018). The expansion was to “enhance the program quality in the institutions of higher education that are educating a majority of Hispanic college students and helping large numbers of Hispanic and low-income students complete postsecondary degrees” (20 U.S. code § 1102 - Purposes, 2018).

While the funding has been expanded to the graduate level, grants are awarded

on a competitive basis to eligible colleges and universities. To be found eligible, institutions must be defined and recognized as a Hispanic serving institution as previously defined as well as offer postbaccalaureate certificates or postbaccalaureate degree-granting programs (20 U.S. code § 1102a - Program authority and eligibility, 2018). Title V grants awards for graduate program institutions, which can be used “to expand postbaccalaureate educational opportunities” for Hispanic and low-income students (20 U.S. code § 1102 - Purposes, 2018).

Additionally, funding can be used to expand course offerings and improve or grow the program quality at the institutions which will be serving Hispanic and low-income students (20 U.S. code § 1102 - Purposes, 2018). When institutions apply for this grant, they must be able to demonstrate how the funding will be used to improve higher education at the graduate level. Also, institutional stakeholders will need to indicate what opportunities will be granted for Hispanic and low-income students (20 U.S. code § 1101a - Definitions; eligibility, 2018).

Supporting a Growing Population

Due to the demographic changes, the Latinx community is outpacing other racial/ethnic groups (see Table 2). The outcome of this change is Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are growing at a fast pace in the United States. The majority of the institutions (HSIs) are community colleges at 53 percent (Contreras et al., 2008). In the nation, the majority of four-year HSIs are located in Puerto Rico at 40 percent (Contreras et al., 2008). The remaining HSIs are

spread over 13 states, “but more than half are in California, Texas, and New Mexico” (Contreras et al., 2008, p. 73). Research shows that Hispanic Serving Institutions’ programs tend to focus more on undergraduate degrees (Doran, 2015). Contreras et al. (2008) sought to find out how an outsider to an institution would know it is Hispanic serving as well as if these institutions produce equitable and comparable educational outcomes for Latinx students. By studying ten institutions classified as Hispanic serving, Contreras et al., (2008) pulled data from the institution websites (such as mission statements) and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Table 2. Projected Race and Hispanic Origin 2017-2060 (United States Census Bureau, 2019)

	2016	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	2055	2060
Total	323128	332639	344234	355101	364862	373528	381390	388922	396557	404483
One race	314648	323069	333181	342432	350454	357252	363105	368473	373781	379228
White	248503	253280	258778	263453	267057	269578	271249	272486	273679	275014
Non-Hispanic White	197970	198571	198751	197992	196105	193210	189671	185954	182411	179162
Black or African American	43001	44734	46906	49009	51002	52919	54814	56725	58680	60690
American Indian and Alaska Native	4055	4232	4452	4663	4859	5038	5199	5341	5468	5583
Asian	18319	20009	22181	24394	26579	28718	30806	32850	34854	36815
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	771	813	865	913	958	999	1038	1071	1100	1125

Two or More Races	8480	9570	11053	12669	14408	16276	18285	20450	22776	25255
Hispanic or Latino	57470	62313	68484	74807	81230	87616	93826	99798	105570	111216

(2016 base population. Resident population as of July 1. Numbers in thousands)

According to Contreras et al. (2018), HSIs even those receiving Title V funding remain underfunded as opposed to other minority-serving degree-granting institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). In reviewing these ten institutions' missions, none of them explicitly mentioned their HSI status. Instead, they indicated they were a diverse institution. Research then showed that these institutions' identity of HSIs is invisible. Contreras et al., (2008) findings presented the discrepancy in meeting a demographic need/requirement to qualify for funding and the production of equitable results for the students being served at these HSIs. When reviewing all measures of success, Latinx students fall below equity at these institutions.

At this time, institutions apply for Title V funding are only required to provide enrollment data with regards to Hispanic students. To improve these institutions, the recommendations made are; one, require institutions to report student outcomes based on gender within racial-ethnic categories and two, require providing benchmarks for monitoring the institution's effectiveness in constructing equitable educational outcomes for Latinx students (Contreras et al., 2008).

The fact is, with each passing year, more institutions are converting to HSIs. At this time of the study, there were over two hundred HSIs in twelve states, and in Puerto Rico (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez & Plum, 2004). As of 2018, there are 523 HSIs and 328 emerging HSIs (Hispanic-Serving Institutions, 2019). Title V funding is limited, and every year fluctuates based on new awards and continuing awards (Funding Status -- Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program, 2019). States which hold the highest number of HSIs as of 2001 are California with fifty-seven and Texas with thirty-two. Due to the increase of the Latinx population, it is vital to understand the role that HSIs play in the “educational advancement of Latino students” (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez & Plum, 2004, pp. 29). Dayton et al. (2004) sought out to examine HSIs from the point of view of administrators and students. In total, eight administrators and fourteen students were interviewed. They all resided in either California or Texas.

Interviews were administered with the twenty-two subjects conducted in person and some via telephone. These interviews focused on the individual’s experience to better understand how HSIs are meeting the needs of their students (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez & Plum, 2004). Dayton et al. (2004) (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Espioza, 2010; Lopez, 1995; Suarez, Fowers, Garwood & Szapocznik, 1997, Sy & Romero, 2008) found Latinx students are faced with cultural challenges as many are first-generation college students. From this study, the parents of these students do not hold a high

school diploma, and so are not able to fully understand the stresses and struggles these students face (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez & Plum, 2004). “These cultural challenges are often reinforced by the location of the Hispanic serving institution” (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez & Plum, 2004, pp. 33). Due to the location of these colleges and universities where the surrounding population is in high concentrations of Latinxs, students do not move out of their home to attend college but instead, continue to live at home and commute to their respected institution.

Dayton et al. (2004) also found that the role of faculty and staff at HSIs is essential. While some students stated they would like to see more agents from a Hispanic background, others said they wanted someone that would be able to be kind and understanding. Still, when analyzing the roles of Latinx faculty and staff, it was agreed on the importance of having Latinx professionals be part of the campus community (Dayton, Gonzalez-Vasquez, Martinez & Plum, 2004). The authors believe that more research is needed in the form of studying the importance of learning communities or other campus programs, which will promote college success for Latinx students. Dayton et al. (2004) reaffirmed the Latinx community is growing, and institutions will not have a choice but to address the Latinx student population.

Access

Educational access has been discussed in many studies. Gina A. Garcia (2016) discusses in her case study “Complicating a Latina/o-serving Identity at a

Hispanic Serving Institution” what it means to be Latinx serving by exploring how organizational members construct this identity. She defines a Hispanic Serving Institution as an “accredited, degree-granting, nonprofit institutions that enroll at least 25 percent or more full-time equivalent undergraduate [Latinx] students” (p. 119). In this study, Garcia explored the co-construction of identity for supporting and enhancing the culture and education of Latinx using a single case-design. This single-case design allowed Garcia to gather in-depth information about one representative HSI. She investigated a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and with a real-life setting, which allowed her to focus on the organization as the component of the analysis. Drawn from detailed interviews with administration, faculty, staff, and focus groups with students; themes emerged and findings to define an HSI better. The themes identified in the study were: 1) Provide access to the Latinx population by focusing on the region. 2) Service to the community which is connected to the values the organization adopts. 3) Connection with faculty from similar backgrounds.

Garcia’s (2016) findings from the single-case design suggested to define HSIs based strictly on enrollment is inadequate. Results permitted a sense-making of Latinx serving identity-based on values for providing both access and service to the surrounding Latinx community. Garcia spoke to students regarding spaces and places that validated their cultural ways of knowing and suggested that an HSI should do more in this regard. Students at HSIs may not feel as though the campus as a whole is serving the Latinx population,

In Ramirez's study (2011), "No One Taught Me the Steps": Latinos' Experiences Applying to Graduate School," she seeks to understand better what barriers and sources of support Latinx students encounter as they navigate the process of applying and gaining admission to graduate school. Ramirez's in-depth semi-structured qualitative interview of 24 Latinx students who had either completed or were in the process of completing their degree at the time of the study found barriers were vast. By reviewing the collected data with Multiracial Feminism and Social and Cultural Capital lenses, Ramirez found that Latinx students encounter many barriers and sources of support as they steered themselves through the graduate school application process. These barriers are 1) Barriers in the application process: a. Lack of knowledge, b. Lack of guidance and support, c. Institutional abuse, d The GRE, and 2) Sources of Support: a. Undergraduate Research Programs, and b. Support from institutional agents (faculty, staff, siblings, etc.).

Recommendations were made to add a "series of policies and practices," which would help Latinx and other underrepresented students in the process of applying and being admitted to graduate school. By doing so, such policies and practices may open the path for Latinx and other underrepresented students to graduate school. Such information could be housed in a graduate studies department or a new department created to help students further their academic careers.

In researching Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Contreras & Contreras (2015) found that these institutions are faced with the possession of multiple identities and with competing interests that are within the institution. HSIs many times did not develop their mission statement with the intent to serve Latino students but were labeled as such due to the surrounding demographics.

Contreras & Contreras (2015) review as to how access is not necessarily the issue with regards to this population as there are many open institutions throughout the United States which they can attend. Rather, based on the research, in California, Latinxs are not being prepared in high school to be college-ready (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Without preparation, Latinxs, especially first-generation Latinas who are the trailblazers in their family, fall behind from their peers who do not face similar barriers. While they have access to countless institutions.

In 2009 less than a third of all Latinx students took suitable classes to enroll in a four-year institution (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Another critical issue is enrollment; Latinxs are more likely to enroll in college as part-time students and attend the community college level during the postsecondary academic career (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). When Latinxs reach the college level, they are then faced with the requirement of completing developmental education courses and fall in a treadmill, often requiring much more than two years to complete the developmental and required courses leading to fatigue (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). A vital recommendation is made to increase

Latinx representation across all systems. “Latino faculty play a critical role in Latino student retention and climate on college campuses. Latinos and faculty of color are more likely to mentor students of color and provide direct research experiences” (Contreras & Contreras, 2015, p. 165). What is found is that across the United States, Latinx faculty rates fall drastically below White and Asian American faculty at California State Universities and Community Colleges levels (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). This is also true with regards to the administration at HSIs, “increasing Latino administrators and leaders would help [close] the void in leaders who possess cultural awareness and direct experience in working with Latino communities” (Contreras & Contreras, 2015, p. 166). Ultimately, changes are needed in the higher education level with HSIs to be able to meet the needs of Latinx students.

The Higher Education Act has made a financial impact on higher education and Hispanic students as the policy provided financial assistance to students in many different forms that benefited the institutions more than the student. Title V institutions, also known as Hispanic Serving Institutions, are more focused on undergraduate degrees (Doran, 2015). According to the research (Garcia, 2016, Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Ramirez, 2011), more attention is needed at the graduate level to be able to support Latinx students studying at a Hispanic Serving Institution. Research shows that there is a lack of knowledge, guidance, and support in bringing forth graduate school awareness for this population (Ramirez, 2011). In the next section, research is reviewed concerning

the glass ceiling effect and how education can help Latinas begin to crack the glass ceiling.

Cracking the Glass Ceiling

The “glass ceiling” is a notion that betrays America’s valued ideologies, most importantly the American Dream. Hymowitz and Schellhardt coined the term glass ceiling initially in a Wall Street Journal in 1986 (Lockwood, 2004). This term was coined to represent the barriers women faced whose goal was senior management (Lockwood, 2004). Over time this term was not only used to refer to women, but it has also now come to signify the barriers that all minorities face for executive leadership positions (Wilson, 2014). The chair of The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission describes the glass ceiling as, “the unseen yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements” (Good for business, 1995, p. 4). This glass ceiling denies opportunities for women and minorities, which in turn denies people the American Dream. The “glass ceiling,” according to the chair of the commission, is one that must be shattered for the benefit and economic stability of our future (Good for business, 1995).

Minorities have made significant achievements in the last three decades, yet the executive suites are overwhelmingly a “white man’s world” (Good for business, 1995). Minorities such as African Americans, Hispanics, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, and American Indians are under-represented in higher-level positions despite the previously mentioned achievements.

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission realized Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. What was then created was a 21-member, bipartisan commission whose mission was to study and provide recommendations to eliminate the artificial barriers faced by women and minorities to be able to advance in their careers (Good for business, 1995). The “glass ceiling” is referred to as “artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities” by The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. What has been found in terms of barriers are three levels; 1) Societal barriers which may be outside the direct control of business. 2) Internal structural barriers within direct control of business. 3) Governmental barriers (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). While the Glass Ceiling Commission has established the existence of the glass ceiling, the data is over twenty years old, and more up-to-date data regarding the glass ceiling is immediately needed.

General Challenges for Women

The metaphor “glass ceiling” was first created by feminists in reference to barriers in the careers of high-achieving women (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). In 1996 Lynch and Post discussed that the glass ceiling was not real but rather “a product of relative ages and qualifications of men and women than of explicit discrimination” (Lynch & Post, 1996, p. 27). In their research, they found that the pay gap is closing and that “women’s [then] current economic position relative to men is more product of individual choices than of their-party discrimination” (Lynch & Post, 1996, p. 28). They then continue stating

that it is, in fact, true that women earn less than men at every educational level achieved. The way that this is justified is the educational choice of women and men. For example, their data showed that women are more inclined to earn degrees in communications, education, English literature, and health profession while men are pursuing degrees in business and engineering. Lynch and Post (1996) state that due to this choice men do tend to earn more based on the demand of their jobs. An example used that women who teach, while they earn less than a man on Wall Street, they get the added benefit of being able to take summers off. A benefit that a man on Wall Street does not have.

Lynch and Post (1996) continue to review education choice at the graduate level (master's and doctorate). They found that women were earning advanced degrees in areas such as education, public administration, English literature, and ethnic and cultural studies. Men, on the other hand, were earning advanced degrees in engineering, physical sciences and science technologies, business management and administrative services and mathematics. Lynch and Post (1996) state that while many feminists believed the issue was that women's work is undervalued the fact is that "all professions have costs and benefits that are both monetary and non-monetary" (Lynch & Post, 1996, pp. 30). Lynch and Post (1996) stated that the pay gap disappears when age, education, and time spent working are aligned. Lynch and Post (1996) continue to speak with regard to women who never marry and in their thirties. These women constantly worked and were found to earn slightly higher than men in the same age group.

According to Lynch and Post (1996) to be able to break the glass ceiling, which does not exist, women must sacrifice their family for advancement and pay. Yet in this study, the same sacrifices are not required for men.

In conclusion, Lynch and Post (1996) state that women do not have the same aspirations as men which is the reason for the pay gap. "Like the wage gap, the glass ceiling, at its core, reflects a choice gap, an age gap, and an aspirations gap" (Lynch & Post, 1996, pp. 33). What is not discussed is race and what is not compared is degree to degree. Lynch & Post have conducted their research but compare a schoolteacher to someone on Wall Street and pulled data which would support their claims during the time in which this was written. They state that the individual is at fault for the pay gap based on the educational choices they have made.

The American Dream

Newman (2015) links research on gender, income inequality, and political ideology when analyzing the presence of the glass ceiling in the United States (U.S.). The persistent pay gap between men and women has become a noticeable issue in the U.S. While the past decade has shown development in income inequality research less attention has been made with regards to inequality in earnings between men and women. The gender pay gap in the U.S. is a prominent disparity. While at the national level, the median earnings for men and women are crudely 77 cents to the dollar (Newman, 2015). In some areas of

the U.S., the average women can gross as little as 19 cents for every dollar a man earns (Newman, 2015).

In this study, Newman (2015) seeks to answer if the level of earnings inequality between men and women influence their level of belief in the American Dream. By utilizing multiple nationally representative surveys directed by the Pew Research Center, Newman (2015) was able to find that the individual woman's belief in the American Dream, meaning with hard work and determination one will be able to obtain financial success, is tied to the level of earnings which is the persistent problem of men and women (Newman, 2015).

Newman (2015) found that a woman's belief in the American Dream is linked to economic resources of women. The American Dream is highly disillusioned when a woman's earnings are three-quarters to the dollar of the earnings to a man. The belief in the American Dream is restored when a woman earns equal or more than a man. Newman (2015) links a woman's earnings with the possibility of breaking the glass ceiling. One way to shatter the glass ceiling has been the result that "female empowerment will follow a nonlinear development trajectory as women's earnings increase related to men's earnings" (Newman, 2015, p. 1010).

History of "Glass Ceiling"

Prasad (2001) studied the concept of the glass ceiling effect and in doing so defined four detailed criteria that must be met to indicate that the glass ceiling exists. They define the glass ceiling as "a specific type of gender or racial

inequality that can be distinguished from other types of inequality” (Prasad, 2001, pp. 656). They reiterate that the glass ceiling is that which is unseen but still an unbreachable barrier which keeps minorities and women from climbing the corporate ladder despite their qualifications and achievements (Prasad, 2001).

The four detailed criteria for a glass ceiling are as follows. A glass ceiling inequality represents that:

- A gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-related characteristics of the employee.
- Is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome.
- Inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels.
- Increases over the course of a career.

(Prasad, 2011)

Prasad (2011) used data gathered from the 1976-93 waves of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). This data was readily available demonstrating longitudinal data earnings and experience. The sample was then restricted to men and women ages 25-59 who had worked 250 hours minimum during the year. Additionally, due to the small sample size only white men, white women, African American men, and African American women considered as variables. Meaning other racial/ethnic categories such as Latinx were not taken into consideration.

“A glass ceiling effect is evident if the magnitude of the inequality not only increases but accelerates as one moves up the hierarchy” (Prasad, 2001 p. 671). All women in the study face a glass ceiling, and the men in the study did not. While this study did not seek to find out why the glass ceiling exists what they did seek to better understand is the proper criteria to define the glass ceiling, as well as, determine whether gender and race glass ceilings exist. Through this study, it is demonstrated that a glass ceiling does exist in the form of gender inequality.

Frankforter (1996) examines the success of women in breaking the glass ceiling and earning high-level positions. Women are absent in upper management positions and often cited the glass ceiling effect. While some women obtain high management positions, it is rare and attributed to tokenism (Frankforter, 1996). “Tokenism enables organizations to present a distorted illusion of fairness and availability of equal promotional opportunities to their important constituencies (Frankforter, 1996 p. 121). “Tokenism enables organizations to present a distorted illusion of fairness and availability of equal promotional opportunities to their important constituencies (Frankforter, 1996 p. 121). As tokens, women are trapped in stereotypical roles, in turn, limiting their opportunities for successful performance and promotion (Frankforter, 1996). According to Frankforter (1996) the percentage of women in the workplace will increase over time. With the large numbers of women, their presence can have a positive influence on their treatment and thus diminishing the glass ceiling

effects. The reason for this is, women make up more than half of the American workforce (Frankforter, 1996).

Frankforter's study consisted of a sample of 321 companies. Two variables were assessed within the firms, time and position. With regard to time, it measured the "differences in the representation of women in corporate officer positions between 1984-1994 to determine [if] there was a temporal effect" (Frankforter, 1996 p. 126). Profession was measured for high-level positions which were either classified as staff or line oriented.

The findings were as follows: a) it has become easier for women to reach high-level positions in corporations, b) the glass ceilings are more easily crossed by women in staff-based positions, c) women are more successful when the companies are both younger and smaller. While this study shows that there are cracks in the glass ceiling, one explanation found was that more women are promoted to high-level positions due to tokenism rather than an overall breaking of the glass ceiling.

Over time there has been an increase of women in the workforce, these same women have faced significant challenges in the workplace (Powell, 2018). As previously noted, these barriers are referred to as the glass ceiling (Wilson, 2014). Wilson (2014) sought to define diversity and culture with the discussion of the phenomenon of the glass ceiling, the history and if it is a reality or myth. More importantly, Wilson (2014) shows in the study how diversity and culture continue to lack in leadership roles in America.

In conducting a literature review on the glass ceiling, Wilson (2014) found discrimination and prejudice remain in existence and likely exacerbated when based on multiple factors of gender and race. Wilson (2014) found that the glass ceiling is a reality today. It is a phenomenon which continues to be a debate and will continue until all minorities are represented equally in the nation's top executive level positions. Wilson (2014) also found that research in the area of the glass ceiling is dated and needs to be updated to demonstrate where women and minorities stand against these barriers. At this time men and women still differ with regards to their work orientation such as the average earnings and occupational segregation (Hakim, 2006). Men will continue to outnumber women in higher level positions due to the higher standards of experience and education (Hakim, 2006).

The nation's civil rights history and subsequent legislative actions and court decisions have proven the long struggles with diversity, discrimination, and cultural differences which are mirrored in corporate America and educational attainment. Wilson (2014) found through the review of the literature that the glass ceiling is in existence and has always been. Barriers which women and minorities are faced with are; "stereotyping, biases and subtle racism stand in the way of complete removal of the glass ceiling" (Wilson, 2014, p. 89). To then be able to break and be rid of the glass ceiling barriers, a "firm commitment to educate, recruit, train, and support all minorities who desire the ranks of executive

leadership, corporate America as well as the rest of society will benefit” (Wilson, 2014, p. 89).

Challenges for Latinas

As previously discussed, scholars have sought to understand the glass ceiling effect, is it real? Does it exist? While some have found that it does exist, others do not believe that gender discrimination is present in the workplace. Dean, Mills-Strachan, Roberts, Carraher, & Cash (2009) empirical examination demonstrates that not only are women underrepresented in higher-level positions, but minorities face more challenges with the glass ceiling effect. Granted, women have been making progress in breaking the glass ceiling, but minority women are faced with more obstacles than white women. Minority women are faced with two significant drawbacks; they are women, and they are not white.

By examining three female minority groups: African American, Hispanic, and Asian American, the research will highlight what each minority group faces as well as ways to overcome those challenges. Mills-Strachan, Roberts, Carraher, & Cash (2009) found that women have been chipping away at the glass ceiling slowly by leaving behind their traditional norms and obtaining more education. Not only must minority women obtain an education, but they too must engage in developing the correct skills, behavior, and knowledge required of a high-level position. Another critical aspect found was the need for mentoring, minority females (as all individuals) such as Latinas who need more support from

their mentors due to the challenges they faced. Lastly, networking is vital to provide minority women the access they need to influential people that will provide support in breaking through the glass ceiling.

The glass ceiling effect was coined by Hymowitz and Schellhardt in 1986 to represent the barriers women faced in the workplace. With time this term has come to signify the barriers that all minorities face in the workplace. While women of all races have general challenges in the workplace, research has shown that Latinas face more obstacles than white women (Dean, Mills-Strachan, Roberts, Carraher, & Cash, 2009). Research also shows that with education, minority women can begin to break the glass ceiling (Dean et al., 2009). At this time, research on the glass ceiling effect is limited and outdated. Limited and outdated research does not mean that the glass ceiling effect has been a myth or that women of all races have broken through the glass ceiling but instead that more research is needed on this subject. In the next section, the challenges which Latina students face will be reviewed concerning poverty, education, family and financial obligations, and biculturalism.

Challenges Latina Students Face

Poverty

According to Gándara (2010), one-fourth of the Latinx population lives below the poverty line. Latinx children are less likely of all significant ethnic/racial groups to attend preschool. Due to this lack of access, Latinx children start school with pre-academic skills lower than classmates. This deficiency may

cause these children to not know their numbers and letters when they begin kindergarten, thus beginning their academic career behind their peers. Another factor holding children back is that many Latinx students are likely to have parents at home that do not speak English or do not speak English well. Another primary reason is parental educational attainment limitations. As these children grow, they are faced with poverty and are in danger of making uneducated decisions.

Due to a lack of financial background, many Latinas are not attending college and even less graduate school as they refuse to utilize student loans. The reason that Latinas are reluctant to take on debt is related to their low-income background and lack of experience with finances. According to Gándara (2015) “a recent analysis of U.S. Department of Education [stated] the average amount of student debt accrued by age 26 for Latinas who had gone to college was [about] \$22,000 in 2012” (p. 11) this is much less than the average for other non-Latinx women. While there are many motives holding Latinas back to apply and matriculating into graduate school at the master level, the fact is there is no easy fix (Gándara, 2010). Multiple parties must be involved to be able to support this population, such as schools, social service agencies, and the courage of politicians to set up to the challenge (Gándara, 2010).

Education

As previously mentioned, Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups

collectively. In “The Latino Education Crises,” written by Patricia Gándara (2010), she discussed how the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States is also the most poorly educated. Latinx children begin school drastically behind peers. Gándara conjectured educating this population is wise to the nation as it will have vast consequences for the country with the job market demanding more education. In her study, Patricia Gándara pulls data from the National Center for Education Statistics to support the claim that this population has fallen behind drastically. The outcome of this study was that there needs to be complete support for teachers, facilities, resources, and curriculum.

Gándara, worked on a White House initiative on educational excellence for Hispanics titled, “Fulfilling America’s Future: Latinas in the U.S., 2015.” She used secondary data to demonstrate not just how far behind Latinas are but how this is an issue for them and the nation as a whole. “Education is the foundation upon which all other aspects of personal and economic well-being are built. People with more education generally have better jobs that pay more, and more often include benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans” (Gándara, 2015, p. 9). Aforementioned, Latinas are the fastest rising population in the United States, and it is estimated that by 2060 Latinas will make up one-third of the females in the country. Latinas have attained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other groups collectively. This is not only a problem at the graduate level but the postsecondary and high school levels as well.

According to Gándara (2015), while Latinas are attending college in record numbers, the sad truth is that they are significantly less likely to complete the degree. Yes, Latinas have made progress at the associate degree and bachelor's degree level. This number, though, has not narrowed the completion gap and, thus, remains substantial. According to Gándara (2015), "in 2013, almost 19 percent of Latinas between 25 and 29 years of age have completed a degree, compared to 23 percent of African American women, 44 percent of white women, and finally 63 percent of Asian women" (p.10).

As mentioned, "Latinas have the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of non-Hispanic racial groups combined" (Gándara, 2015). The fact is that as of 2013, only four percent of Latinas have accomplished a master's degree or higher by the age of 29 compared to nearly five percent of black, 11 percent of whites and 22 percent of Asian women (Gándara, 2015). In 2003, only two percent of Latinas held a graduate degree. With this growth alone, it is still not enough to close the noteworthy gap between Latinas and other women.

While there is more than one minority in the nation that needs attention concerning their educational needs, the focus of this study is on Latinas for many reasons (Gándara 2010, Gándara, 2015, Garcia, 2016, Lango, 1995). While Latinas have recently accomplished more educationally (see Table 3) than their male counterparts, "they are still earning less than their brothers in the labor market" see Table 4 (Gándara, 2015, p. 6). Latinas still have the lowest high

school graduation rates and the lowest college completion rates of all women.

The reason as to why they are significant in a society based on the research is that Latinas are the kingpin of the next generation (Gándara, 2015).

Table 3. Educational Attainment of the Population 18 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 2018

Hispanic (of any race)	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Professional degree	Doctoral degree		Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Professional degree	Doctoral degree
Male					Female				
18 years and over	2,143	551	115	11	18 years and over	2,623	846	106	85
18 to 24 years	120	4	-	3	18 to 24 years	231	7	-	-
25 years and over	2,022	547	115	108	25 years and over	2,392	838	106	85
25 to 29 years	391	66	10	2	25 to 29 years	451	72	8	7
30 to 34 years	307	69	2	15	30 to 34 years	383	133	13	14
35 to 39 years	274	77	18	7	35 to 39 years	331	124	17	5
40 to 44 years	205	74	14	12	40 to 44 years	282	123	14	7
45 to 49 years	212	65	15	15	45 to 49 years	250	98	6	12
50 to 59 years	187	61	20	20	50 to 59 years	205	79	15	5
60 to 64 years	150	43	7	11	60 to 64 years	163	63	11	13

65 to 69 years	137	29	10	9	65 to 69 years	111	63	7	4
70 to 74 years	75	23	4	5	70 to 74 years	97	33	5	9
75 years and over	43	27	8	6	75 years and over	53	29	5	5
	42	12	7	5		66	22	5	4

(United States Census Bureau, 2019)

Table 4. Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over (Hispanic or Latino)

	Estimate	Margin of Error		Estimate	Margin of Error
Total:	40,234,156	+/-7,989			
Male:	20,264,000	+/-5,297	Female	19,970,156	+/-5,166
Worked full-time	10,699,676	+/-17,067	Worked full-time	6,639,587	+/-14,364
No earnings	485	+/-173	No earnings	495	+/-14,364
With earnings	10,699,191	+/-17,095	With earnings	6,639,092	+/-14,364
\$1 to \$2,499 or \$2,500 to	17,732	+/-984	\$1 to \$2,499 or \$2,500 to	9,912	+/-747
\$5,000 to	19,659	+/-969	\$5,000 to	18,091	+/-989
\$7,500 to	84,983	+/-2,635	\$7,500 to	77,520	+/-2,371
\$10,000 to	91,329	+/-2,631	\$10,000 to	89,604	+/-2,378
	260,399	+/-4,682		251,107	+/-5,001

\$12,500 to	278,582	+/-4,853	\$12,500 to	275,939	+/-4,568
\$15,000 to	476,190	+/-6,277	\$15,000 to	415,228	+/-6,799
\$17,500 to	498,167	+/-7,206	\$17,500 to	410,736	+/-5,699
\$20,000 to	764,980	+/-8,628	\$20,000 to	524,413	+/-6,096
\$22,500 to	565,138	+/-7,554	\$22,500 to	392,227	+/-5,411
\$25,000 to	1,181,069	+/-12,329	\$25,000 to	737,674	+/-7,896
\$30,000 to	1,097,206	+/-8,381	\$30,000 to	672,602	+/-6,090
\$35,000 to	856,671	+/-8,907	\$35,000 to	513,074	+/-6,373
\$40,000 to	794,434	+/-6,321	\$40,000 to	453,680	+/-5,801
\$45,000 to	533,614	+/-4,877	\$45,000 to	306,364	+/-4,305
\$50,000 to	596,597	+/-5,942	\$50,000 to	309,524	+/-4,458
\$55,000 to	721,060	+/-8,205	\$55,000 to	374,690	+/-4,652
\$65,000 to	476,378	+/-6,429	\$65,000 to	240,777	+/-4,097
\$75,000 to	665,609	+/-8,221	\$75,000 to	312,878	+/-4,594
\$100,000	719,394	+/-9,965	\$100,000	253,052	+/-4,434

(United States Census Bureau, 2019)

Family and Financial Obligations

Latinx children and young adults have family obligations that are not standard for others from different backgrounds. One recent study found that “Latina adolescents more often fulfilled family obligations than did European American or Asian American adolescents” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 215). The

responsibilities that these children and young adults are being faced with are serving as the translator for their parents or other family members, helping with the home, taking care of siblings and at an older age, and making financial contributions to the family income (Sy & Romero, 2008).

Susan Sy and Jessica Romero (2008) sought to understand the diverse kinds of family responsibilities among Latina college students and how responsibilities disturb their college experiences. Conducting a semi-structured qualitative interview, Sy & Romero (2008) interviewed 20 Latina adolescents and young adults between 18 and 29 years of age. These subjects were either first or second generation in the United States and presently attending a four-year college program had participated in some college or had completed a four-year college degree. By using a grounded theory methodology, an orderly analysis of transcribed interviews was then conducted from the semi-structured interviews. Three significant themes appeared from the data which were collected. Participants stressed the importance of 1) Emerging self-sufficiency to sustain the family. 2) The voluntary nature of their financial contributions. 3) Their role as a surrogate parent for younger family members.

In the study, "Challenges and Resources of Mexican American Students within the Family, Peer Group, and University" Edward Lopez (1995) sought to understand better why attrition, retention and graduate rates continued to be low by Mexican Americans. This phenomenon continues to be a concern for educators, researchers, and policymakers. In his study, Lopez (1995) measured

age and gender patterns in the obstacles and resources Mexican American students experience while gaining their college education. Lopez conducted a study where he interviewed participants in a group to complete a self-paced questionnaire that required 20 to 30 minutes to complete. What was found was that Mexican American college students distinguish challenges such as family and financial responsibilities as blockades and as a consequence may drop out of the academic pipeline and “enter in alternative lifestyles, such as early employment, military service, parenthood, or gang participation” (Lopez, 1995).

The study “The Cost of Getting Ahead: Mexican Family System Changes After Immigration” discussed how immigration motivated Mexican family relationships. The purpose of this study was to explore three questions: a) How do undocumented Mexican families change after immigration? b) How do these changes affect family members and their interactions? c) What factors explain postimmigration family system adjustment in undocumented families? (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007).

The grounded theory study focused on; 12 youths and 14 parents from 10 undocumented Mexican families. These participants were recruited utilizing religious institutions, adult education programs, and community events. The undocumented Mexican families had immigrated to the United States within the prior seven years. Parents and children were interviewed separately to avoid influencing one another. To analyze the data, Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) used NVivo. The authors broke the text down into concepts. To ensure

trustworthiness, the authors used the triangulation of methods, sources, analysts, and perspectives.

Bacallao & Smokowski (2007) found costs at hand to get ahead meant family separation, family system changes after immigration, and temporal orientation after immigration. During immigration, the “roles shift and boundary changes” and networks from Mexico are lost. The children go home to a “cold house,” as both parents tended to work, and so the children were left to care for themselves. Research results found that familismo helped these families have a connection with their family and thus a connection to being Mexican. The findings supported the necessity for the growth of prevention and intervention programs for Mexican immigrant families. These programs helped reduce acculturation strain, helped families cope with postimmigration changes, and promoted cultural assets such as familism and traditions.

“The study delineated the ways in which the costs of getting ahead influenced the postimmigration adjustment in undocumented Mexican families who immigrated” (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, p. 66). Parents relocated to be able to provide a better life for their children and improve their education. Though this was the plan, these families shared stress with the change as familism is heavily implanted in this culture.

In the Latinx community familismo, a cultural value that emphasizes the standing of strong family loyalty, closeness, and underwriting to the wellbeing of the family, extended family, and relationship networks (Sy & Romero, 2008). This

same cultural value, familismo, requires family members to put the needs of the family first. This is especially true when a member of the family is required to make personal sacrifices (Sy & Romero, 2008). Due to this critical family value, Latinas experience a high rate of attrition to either drop out of college or stop their education to help their family and meet the family needs. "Because Latinas are underrepresented in higher education, and because a large percentage of Latinas have parents with little or no college experience, the young women who do enroll in four-year programs are further at risk of experiencing conflict between the expectations of their home and school context" (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 214). Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) noted in their study that "Familism involves a deeply ingrained sense of the individual being inextricably rooted in the family." Due to the change when parents immigrated to the United States to provide their children with a brighter future "normative conflicts between parents and adolescents can be exacerbated by acculturation stress, creating intercultural as well as, intergenerational difficulties between family members" (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, p. 53).

As previously mentioned, family obligations are particularly critical for Latina adolescents and young adults. Roberta Espinoza (2010) brings awareness to this in her study "The Good Daughter Dilemma: Latinas Managing Family and School Demands." Guided by Familismo, Marianismo, and Chicana Feminist Theory lenses, Espinoza sought to understand how Latinas pursuing a higher education managed the many stresses of school and family relationships.

In interviewing 15 Latina graduate students, Espinoza found themes were linked with two topics: Family relationships/responsibilities growing up and relationships/responsibilities during graduate school. The outcome of the study was that these subjects were able to balance family and school in two different ways: 1) Communicating with their family the responsibilities they were faced with and 2) Separation, in that students would keep family and school detached to protect the family relationship, these students would put family before their studies. The final suggestions made from this study were that 1) Institutions should improve how Latinx students are informed of student support services before beginning their academic journey, and 2) Faculty should attend workshops if they work closely with Latina students to understand better the challenges they faced.

Espinoza (2010) concluded that Latina students with a robust familismo background not only have academic goals but also seek to continue to be a good daughter. When pursuing higher education, the pressure experienced to meet the needs of both their academic and family lives is significant. To be successful in both areas, the study found that Latina students engage in various levels of integration and separation.

Biculturalism

In “Biculturalism, Differentness, Loneliness, and Alienation in Hispanic College Students” (Suarez et al., 1997), biculturalism is defined as “developing along two independent dimensions, one of which involves a linear process of

accommodation to the host culture. While biculturalism may help some individuals, this is not always the case” (p. 491). In this article, the purpose of the study was to examine the possible stress-buffering effect of biculturalism on feelings of loneliness and alienation related to feelings of differentness in Hispanic college students in a bicultural setting.

The significant findings from this study were that there is an inverse relationship between biculturalism and feelings of loneliness and alienation. There is a positive relationship between supposed differences in value alignments from family and feelings of loneliness and alienation. Next, there was no significant interaction found between biculturalism and perceived differences from family about loneliness or alienation. Lastly, the alleged difference from peers was not found to be significantly related to loneliness or alienation. Due to the limitations of the study, which was restricted to students from Cuba, it would be interesting to study other Hispanic decedents and biculturalism. For example, is this true for students of Mexican descent?

Mentorship

Lyon, Scroggins, & Rule (1990) found that “mentoring can play an important part in the growth of a... student. The belief that a particular member/agent of change is taking an interest in a student’s progress leads that student to feel better about [their] academic experience” (Lyon et al., 1990, p.284). Students who experience a close academic relationship with a faculty member had a richer academic education than those who did not (Lyon et al.,

1990). The study found in “The Mentor in Graduate Education” sought to answer if there is any inclination for males to be subject to mentored at a higher rate than females and if mentoring makes a difference for students. This survey-based design study surveyed graduate students at a single university with a large variety of graduate programs. The questionnaire was sent to 3,134 full-time graduate students, 80 percent, or 2,508 students completed and returned the questionnaire. The significant findings are as follows 1) Most graduate students felt they have a mentor or a faculty member who is following their advancement through their program. 2) Almost three-quarters of all respondents agree with the statement that they have a faculty member who is taking a special interest in their progress. 3) There is no evidence that males are more likely to be mentored than females at the studied university (Lyon et al., 1990).

As previously mentioned, the presence of mentors is crucial for all students. Yet, it is all the more critical for Latinas as many of them are trailblazers (Gándara, 2015), the first in their family to attend college. This means they do not have a family member who can guide them through course selections, financial aid applications, and so on. William Lyon et al., (1990) stated in his study that the students “who had experienced a close working relationship with a faculty member had a fuller education than their counterparts who did not” (p. 284). This means that mentorship is important and helps the student be all the more successful. Mentoring can play an essential part in a graduate student’s growth and academic achievements (Lyon et al., 1990).

As Latinas continue to participate in higher education, the current policies continue to be concerning (Ceja, 2006). Research shows that Latinxs are lagging regarding degree obtainment and attendance at four-year universities (Fry, 2002; Perna, 2000). These students can be found in the community college system. For first-generation students, especially Latinas accessing college information is critical (Ceja, 2006). According to Ceja (2006), "given their first-generation status, the information and resources necessary to make decisions about college may not always be available to them within the home environment" (p.87). In his study, "Understanding the Role of Parents and Siblings as Information Sources in the College Choice Process of Chicana Students," Ceja seeks to research the college choice process for first-generation students. The study reviewed the educational experience of 20 Chicana students who were first-generation college-bound and from a low socioeconomic background. One-on-one semi-structured interviews permitted Ceja (2006) to comprehend the role of parents and siblings as information resources throughout the college choice process. The subjects were interviewed three times, once during the fall semester, the end of their senior year, and the final interview six months after graduation.

Ceja (2006) found that parents of these students were limited in the support they could provide during the college choice process. The support parents were able to provide; emotional and financial support essential to the students (Ceja, 2006). Another outcome of this study was Latinas who have an older sibling were able to see them as the trailblazer and share the college

experience with younger siblings. Because of this, these older siblings were able to expose their family to the college choice process early on and could be seen as mentors to younger siblings. Lastly, Ceja (2006) found that Latinas who were first in their family to apply to college felt they were obligated to teach and inform their parents about the various aspects of the college choice experience. This obligation then caused a mental strain of attempting to engage in double-duty, but one they felt was needed to be able to make things easier on their younger siblings.

From this study, it is understood how important college choice is and what goes into choosing the best college for oneself. Ceja (2006) demonstrated through this study, the importance of “protective agent” when seeking information on higher education. It is demonstrated how those closest to us are not able to serve as mentors but also just how important and helpful it is to have a mentor when going through the college application process. While college graduates may have some experience when they earn their first degree, that is not to say they have experience in all higher education processes and procedures. When a first-generation college alumna is seeking to apply to graduate school, who is to say that the vicious cycle of the college choice process does not start over, this then leaves students baffled once more as they were when they first applied to college. Mentorship at all levels is essential for students, and so should be reviewed at all levels to ensure success for all students.

Based on the literature, Latinas experience both challenges and lack of resources within the university pipeline. Additionally, Latinas experience barriers outside of the education system in the form of finances, domestic responsibilities, discouragement, and at times discrimination. Lastly, and similar to other minorities, Latinas face the “glass ceiling” challenge in that regardless of education and experience, an unbreachable barrier will be placed to prevent minorities from climbing the corporate ladder. Latinas are faced with numerous challenges; the research shows that there are president challenges for students who are first-generation or second language learners. All students of all ethnicities struggle with getting into college. Through itself, it is at the very least a journey if not a race when multiple hurdles confront a first-generation Latinas who seek to not only access and complete a postsecondary degree but desires graduate degrees as well if she is even aware of aspiring for one.

Summary

Latinas are one in four students in public institutions across the United States. By the year 2060, Latinas will form nearly a third of the female population of the United States (Gándara, 2015). This population will continue to grow, and so it is vital to understand how to best support this population in their academic careers. While Title V was established to help support Hispanic Serving Institutions (Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Title V, 2018), it is questionable if these institutions are serving this population or merely enrolling the said population to obtain federal funding (Contreras et al., 2008). Currently,

institutions are only required to report the number of students enrolled (Contreras et al., 2008). There are no checks and balances to inquire if these HSIs are supporting and serving this population (Contreras et al., 2008). More needs to be done to ensure that this population is receiving the support that they need to be successful. As previously mentioned, the Latinx community is outpacing other racial/ethnic groups (Doran, 2015; Gándara, 2015).

As a result, HSIs are growing at a fast pace in the United States (Doran, 2015). With the 2060 projection regarding Latinas, HSIs are estimated to continue their rapid growth in the nation. Based on the literature, Latinas experience both challenges and lack of resources within the university pipeline. These barriers are in the form of finances, domestic responsibilities, discouragement, and at times discrimination (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, Espinoza, 2010, Gándara, 2010, Gándara, 2015, Garcia, 2016, Lango, 1995, Lopez, 1995, Suarez et al., 1997, Sy & Romero, 2008). Latinas will also face the "glass ceiling" challenge in that regardless of education and experience, an unbreachable barrier will be placed to keep "minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder" (Federal Glass Commission, 1995 pp. 4). Latinas classified as both a minority and a female will have to face this challenge on top of all the challenges mentioned earlier. The literature defined the concept of the glass ceiling and further verified that it is still prevalent today. Also presented was information validating the gaps in postsecondary access, retention, and completion based on race. The research additionally shows that

there are present challenges for students who are first-generation or second language learners. If we agree that getting into college and through in itself is at least a journey if not somewhat of a race, then what type of race is created when multiple hurdles confront a first-generation Latina who seeks to not only access and complete a postsecondary degree but, desires graduate degrees as well. Alternatively, does she even know to aspire for one? The methods section which follows will provide the process by which the various hurdles will be identified and what assistance has proved helpful to women who have achieved a graduate degree.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter identifies the methodology the researcher will use to obtain qualitative data in answering the research questions posed by the study. Currently, the Latinx population is the fastest-growing population in the United States. Of that population, Latinas account for one in five women in the United States (Gándara, 2015, Gándara & Contreras, 2009). It is estimated that by 2060 Latinas will make up one-third of the females in the nation (Gándara, 2015). Studies have found that Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups collectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, Gándara, 2015, Quate & Harper, 2015).

While the Latinx population growth is impressive, Latinas' attendance and admission rates at the graduate level are low (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). "How [these women] fare in the education system is closely related to how they will fare in the economy and civil society, with significant consequences for the future social and economic well-being of the states with a large Latina population" (Gándara, 2015, p. 7). The job market continues to demand more education, and the Latinx population continues to make up a large portion of the workforce (Posselt & Grodsky, 2017; Gándara, 2015 & 2010; Newman, 2015). Education is the foundation which both personal and economic

well-being is built on, by the year 2060, Latinas will form nearly a third of the female population of the United States, and so it is vital to understand how to best support these women in their academic careers (Posselt & Grodsky, 2017, Gándara, 2015).

Studies that have addressed the problem indicated that the barriers which the Latinx population is faced regarding graduate school are 1) Barriers in the application process: a. Lack of knowledge, b. Lack of guidance and support, c. Institutional abuse, d. The GRE and 2) Sources of Support: a. Undergraduate Research Programs, and b. Support from institutional agents (faculty, staff, siblings, etc.) (Ramirez, 2011). Research has also shown that Latinas are faced with numerous challenges such as poverty, education, family and financial obligations, biculturalism, and mentorship (Gándara, 2010, 2015, Garcia, 2016, Espinoza, 2010, Sy & Romero, 2008, Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, Ceja, 2006, Suarez et al., 1997, Lango, 1995, Lopez, 1995, Lyon et al., 1990).

Latinos are one in four students in public institutions across the United States. This population will continue to grow, and so it is vital to understand how to best support this population in their academic careers. Title V was created in 1998 to assist certain colleges and universities, now known as Hispanic Serving Institutions. This assistance was in place to improve the higher education of Hispanic students. (Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Title V, 2018). It is questionable if these institutions are serving this population or merely enrolling the said population to obtain federal funding (Contreras et al., 2008).

Currently, institutions are only required to report the number of students enrolled (Contreras et al., 2008). There are no checks and balances to inquire if these HSIs are supporting and serving this population (Contreras et al., 2008). More needs to be done to ensure that this population is receiving the support that they need to be successful. As previously mentioned, the Latinx community is outpacing other racial/ethnic groups (Doran, 2015; Gándara, 2015). As a result, HSIs are growing at a fast pace in the United States (Doran, 2015). With the 2060 projection regarding Latinas, HSIs are estimated to continue their rapid growth in the nation. Based on the literature, Latinas experience both challenges and lack of resources within the university pipeline. These barriers are in the form of finances, domestic responsibilities, discouragement, and at times discrimination (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, Espinoza, 2010, Gándara, 2010, Gándara, 2015, Garcia, 2016, Lango, 1995, Lopez, 1995, Suarez et al., 1997, Sy & Romero, 2008). Latinas will also face the "glass ceiling" challenge in that regardless of education and experience, an unbreachable barrier will be placed to keep "minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder" (Federal Glass Commission, 1995 pp. 4). Latinas classified as both a minority and a female will have to face this challenge on top of all the aforementioned challenges. The literature defined the concept of the glass ceiling and further verified that it is still prevalent today. Also presented was information validating the gaps in postsecondary access, retention, and completion based on race. The research additionally shows that there are present challenges for

students who are first-generation or second language learners. If we agree that getting into college and through in itself is at least a journey if not somewhat of a race, then what type of race is created when multiple hurdles confront a first-generation Latina who seeks to not only access and complete a postsecondary degree but, desires graduate degrees as well. Alternatively, does she even know to aspire for one?

This qualitative validation study will address the deficiencies of the previous research by obtaining data from first-generation Latinas attending an HSI and understand how to provide graduate school awareness for the population mentioned above best and, at the same time, obtain best practices to market graduate school to Latinas. As discussed, the attendance and admission rates of Latinas at the graduate level is low. Additionally, through this study, it will allow Latinas to provide their stories about their academic careers and what barriers have stood in their way. By obtaining information on these challenges, work can begin on how to best support these students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative validation case study is to examine the graduate school enrollment gap for first-generation Latinas at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Southern California. As previously mentioned, Latinas are the fastest-growing population in the nation and comprise one-fifth of the female population (Gándara, 2015). Studies have found that Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to

women of all other non-Latinx racial groups collectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, Gándara, 2015, Quaye & Harper, 2015). As impressive as the population growth is, Latinas' attendance and admission rates at the graduate level is low. This study is guided by, but not limited to, the following questions:

- In what ways, if any, do family and cultural experiences influence the academic pathways for first-generation Latinas?
- In what ways, if any, do in-class and out-of-class experiences influence the academic pathway to graduate school for first-generation Latinas?
- In what ways, if any, do race, class, and gender play a part in the lives of these women and their educational goals?
- In what ways, if any, do awareness of graduate school, options, cost impact the career goals of these women?

In this chapter, the purpose of using a validation case study method as the researcher design will be explained. Subsequently, the research setting, selection of participants, data collection, and interview protocol will additionally be discussed. The process of data analysis will be described along with the trustworthiness of the data, followed by a summary of the relevant points of the chapter.

Research Design

Rationale for a Mixed-Methods Case Study

A qualitative validation case study research design will be used as a methodology for this case study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) “qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives (p. 3-4). Due to the study being in the form of personal experiences, interviews, and a case study, a qualitative research approach is appropriate for this study. The qualitative portion of the study will rely on field notes, conversations, interviews, family stories, and life experiences from first-generation Latinas related to graduate school aspirations. According to Creswell (2014), “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, collecting data in the participants’ settings, analyzing the data inductively, building from participants to general themes, and making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2014, p. 246).

The topic of this study focuses on exploring not only the lived experiences of first-generation Latinas but where this population stands at a Hispanic Serving Institution in Southern California at the graduate level. Creswell (2014) stated

that the use of a case study is beneficial in a design inquiry and evaluation. A case study is “a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, of one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period” (p.14). Concerning this study, first-generation Latinas will be evaluated in a higher education setting and, as previously stated, where this population stands at this institution.

Research Setting

The setting of the research will take place at a four-year public institution in Southern California. The university is classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution and one of the 23 general campuses of the California State University system. The institution offers Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctor of Education degrees, as well as credential and professional programs.

Research Sample

The subjects will be limited to those who self-identify as Latinx and self-identify as female (i.e., Latina). The subjects will be between the age group of 20-45 and must hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or be in the last year of their undergraduate program. The use of purposeful sampling is beneficial to the study as it will focus on why first-generation Latinas are or are not applying to graduate school. According to Creswell (2014), purposeful sampling “will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p. 189).

The limitations of the population are only a small percentage of the student population will be taken into consideration, and so it will be limited.

Research Data

Research data will be secured on the researcher's computer and backed up on a portable hard drive. The computer is protected by a password as well as facial recognition. Regarding the hard drive, this will be placed in a safe and locked by a passcode in the researcher's home office, where it will be kept for seven years. Similarly, the transcripts and field notes will be kept in the same safe and kept for seven years. Concerning the audio recordings, they will be saved on a portable hard drive (belonging to the researcher), which has been mentioned is locked but will also be kept for seven years. Lastly, all data will be saved on a portable hard drive and stored in the researcher's home safe if the computer or hard drive is out of date or no longer used within seven years.

Data Collection

Once the Institutional Review Board approves the study (IRB), an e-mail to the study body will be sent along with access to the survey. This e-mail will have a lay summary of the research and study being conducted so that the study body will understand why the survey is being requested. According to Madison (2011), "the lay summary is more for the benefit of the subjects... it serves to assist them in understanding who you are, what you are doing, and what their role will be in the [research] process" (p.25). The e-mail will request participation in the study in the form of a survey as well as an invitation to volunteer for a

follow-up one-on-one interview. If the student agrees, they will be able to complete the survey anonymously. At the beginning of the survey, the participants will be asked if they self-identify as:

- Latina
- Female
- Between the age group of 20-45
- Hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or be in the last year of their undergraduate program
- Hold a graduate degree or currently in a graduate program
- First-generation (Students/alumni with parents born outside of the United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That student (descendant) is the first to be born in the United States to parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university.)

If they select yes to the criteria, then the remainder of the survey will be made available to them. As they progress through the survey, they will be able to answer questions on a multiple-choice and yes/no format. Additionally, respondents will have the opportunity to elaborate their responses with an open-ended written response. From these written responses, participants will be selected for the one-on-one interview if they indicated they are willing to participate in the second portion of the data collection. If they are interested, at the end of the survey, they will have the opportunity to provide their contact

information. To complete the study, a minimum of the following individuals will need to be interviewed and will be randomly selected from those volunteering and meeting the following criteria:

- Five (4) Latinas who have not applied to graduate school and have either completed their bachelors or are in the last year of their undergraduate degree
- Three (4) Latinas in graduate school
- Two (2) Latina alumni from graduate programs

To be able to find Latina, alumnus, with a graduate degree, the snowball technique will be used to be able to obtain a participant willing to meet for a one-on-one interview. Creswell defines the snowball technique as a method in which “the researcher asks participants to identify others to become members of the sample” (Creswell, 2012, p. 146).

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data of the study, patterns, categories, and themes will be built from the bottom up. The collection will be done by organizing data into progressively more abstract pieces of information (Creswell, 2014). The inductive process will be used to ensure that crucial information is not overlooked. According to Creswell (2014), the “inductive process illustrates working back and forth between the themes and the database until the researchers have established a comprehensive set of themes. Then deductively, the researchers look back at their data from the themes to determine if more evidence can

support each theme or whether they need to gather additional information” (p. 186). From such themes and data, no program will be used; rather, all qualitative data will be analyzed by hand.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Due to the nature of the study being qualitative, to validate and legitimize the qualitative findings of the study, trustworthiness must be obtained. Trustworthiness will be accomplished by taking and managing field notes and well-organized transcriptions of one-on-one interviews from the aforementioned population. Furthermore, to be able to ensure trustworthiness in the study, coding will need to be checked and rechecked to ensure that the coding is completed correctly and accurately. It will be checked by the researcher as well by the faculty advisor.

Positionality of the Research

As previously mentioned, research has found the Latinx population is the fastest-growing population in the United States. By 2060, Latinas will make up nearly a third of the total United States population (Gándara, 2015; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The growth is impressive, and yet Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups collectively (Gandara, 2015). Because of this, the research which I plan to focus on is to examine the graduate school enrollment gap for first-generation Latinas at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in Southern California.

Since 2002, I have worked for a California State University in either a student assistant or a staff position. In the past ten years, my primary role has been to advise graduate students through admissions, curriculum, and graduate processes. During this tenure, I noticed that the number of applications from the Latinx community was smaller than those of other racial groups. Moreover, I found that when I would speak to Latinas regarding graduate school, often, self-efficacy stood in the way of their academic growth.

As a first-generation college graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master's in Public Administration, I am now part of the six percent in the Inland Empire to hold a graduate degree (Johnson et al., 2008). Time and time again, I have reflected on how I decided to apply to graduate school and in such a different field from my undergraduate degree. Reflecting, I realized that I was working in higher education and had mentors who were encouraging me to grow professionally and academically. Additionally, I had financial and family support to be able to accomplish these academic goals. In my professional experience, I have come to understand how rare this support is for the Latinx population as graduate school tends to be expensive and time-consuming. As previously mentioned, a lack of self-efficacy may prevent many from applying to graduate school but especially the Latinx community, which may be linked to the lack of familiar faces, lack of mentors, and financial support (Suarez, Fowers, Garwood, & Szapocznik, 1997).

Using a self-reflexivity lens (Tracy, 2010), I will need to understand and take

into consideration that not all first-generation Latinas have had the privileges that I have had. Though I had a challenging experience during my undergraduate degree, I attributed it to a lack of mentorship. While working at the university, I was able to connect with mentors that understood the value of graduate school. Due to this access and privilege, I will need to realize that not all first-generation Latinas have the same access, which I obtained after my bachelor's degree. I will need to remain self-aware and keep my probable judgments at bay.

Self-reflexivity will help my research as I will need to understand the point of view of the students and alumni to obtain their experience fully. With this lens, it will be possible to comprehend how to begin to close the enrollment gap for the Latina community. While I will be able to reflect on my experience as a first-generation student and alum from an HSI, it will merely give me an idea of what my research will consist of. These experiences and knowledge will then be able to launch and shape my research.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative validation case study is to seek best practices in promoting and advertising graduate school to an underrepresented population. In turn, by obtaining these practices, institutions will be able to begin working on awareness and access to the targeted population. While seeking such information, the subjects, first-generation Latinas, will also be able to share their stories on their educational journey. As a researcher, I will attempt to retell the stories to gain insight. This chapter presented the qualitative research design

and methodology. This case study will allow for data to be collected as well as allow for participants' voices to be amplified, individually, and collectively.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Currently, the Latinx population is the fastest-growing population in the United States. Latinas account for one in five women in the United States (Gándara, 2015, Gándara & Contreras, 2009). It is estimated that this growth will continue, and by the year 2060, Latinas will make up one-third of the females in the nation (Gándara, 2015). This is important with regards to educational attainment as studies have found that Latinas while outnumbering other Latinas as a whole, have not achieved what other non-Latinx racial groups have collectively. Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; Gándara, 2015; Quate & Harper, 2015). Literature details the many challenges in which Latinas are faced with; poverty (Gándara, 2015), education (Gándara, 2010, 2015, Lango, 1995), family and financial obligations (Espinoza, 2010, Sy & Romero, 2008, Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, Lopez, 1995) biculturalism (Suarez et al., 1997) and mentorship (Gándara, 2015, Ceja, 2006, Fry, 2002, Perna, 2000, Lyon et al., 1990). It is prudent to understand how to best support these women as to how they perform academically is linked to how they will fare in the economy and civil society (Gándara, 2015). Earning a graduate degree is vital to be able to continue to climb the economic ladder (Kuh et al., 2006). While it is not required for all, all students need to obtain the same information and obtain the same awareness.

The goal of this chapter is to present the findings of the research, which was conducted for this study. This study explored how to provide the best graduate school awareness for first-generation Latinas at a public four-year Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) in Southern California.

Collection of Data and Participants

The qualitative validation case study was completed in two phases. The first phase included a quantitative survey. The data collected from students at this particular institution was regarding graduate school awareness, if they are aware of graduate school, if they are aware where they can attend graduate school, if they are aware of the cost of graduate school, if graduate school is part of their academic goal, why or why not. The second phase of the study was in the form of interviews. At the end of the survey, those who self-identified as Latina, female, first-generation in the United States, between the age group of 20-45 and were either a current student at the undergraduate level, or a current student at the graduate level, or alumni with a Bachelor of Science or Arts or alumni with a graduate degree had the option to opt in to be contacted for a one on one interview. After the survey, I interviewed (one-on-one) 10 participants, which included a variety of students/alumni at various class standing to examine the graduate school enrollment gap for first-generation Latinas at a public four-year Hispanic Serving Institution in Southern California.

During the second phase, participants were selected at random from four

different categories 1) Current undergraduate student Latinas 2) Post-college without a graduate degree 3) Current graduate student Latinas and 4) Post-college with a graduate degree. The interview questions were designed to provide ten selected Latinas a platform to tell their stories. The interviews of the ten first-generation Latinas were interpreted through the four research questions:

- In what ways, if any, do family and cultural experiences influence the academic pathways for first-generation Latinas?
- In what ways, if any, do in-class and out-of-class experiences influence the academic pathway to graduate school for first-generation Latinas?
- In what ways, if any, do race, class, and gender play a part in the lives of these women and their educational goals?
- In what ways, if any, do awareness of graduate school, options, cost impact the career goals of these women?

Results of the Study

The total number of participants for the survey was unknown. For phase one of the study, the number of participants to complete the initial survey was difficult to pinpoint. The reason for this uncertainty was that the survey would be sent out to the study body of the institution. As of 2018, the population of the institution is 19,973, with 89% of the said population seeking an undergraduate degree and 81% identifying as first-generation college students. Of the student

population, the desired number of participants is 5%, which equates to 999 students. The survey was designed to identify a specific population:

- Latina
- Female
- Between the age group of 20-45
- Hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or be in the last year of their undergraduate program
- First-generation (Students/alumni with parents born outside of the United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That student (descendant) is the first to be born in the United States to parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university.)

If the individual completing the survey does not identify in the abovementioned criteria, they were prompted with a message thanking them for completing the survey. For example, if a male student were to give consent to participate in the emailed survey and they indicate they self-identify as male, their information would be collected that they completed the survey, identified as male, and so could not continue in the survey. This participant, though a male and though only answered one question of the survey, would be considered a participant. As previously discussed, at the end of the survey those who self-identified as Latina, female, first-generation in the United States, between the age group of 20-45 and were either a current student at the undergraduate level,

or a current student at the graduate level, or alumni with a Bachelor of Science or Arts or alumni with a graduate degree had to option to opt in to be contacted for a one on one interview.

Survey Results

As previously discussed, the desired number of participants was 5% of the student population, which equates to 999 participants. The survey was live and accepting responses for two weeks. During that time, 215 individuals completed the survey. This equated to a 21% completion rate. According to Survey Statistical Confident: How Many is Enough (2020), due to my population being large, a 21% completion rate is a success. The survey consisted of a total of 29 questions of those 29 questions, 19 were multiple-choice/yes or no responses. The rest where open-ended responses or formalities such as agreeing to participate in the survey, agreeing to be contacted for a one-on-one interview, or entering an opportunity drawing as gratitude for completing the survey. The following is the data collected from the survey. With each response, the responses decrease as the participants are filtered out if they are not the desired population. For this study, the survey which was created by the author solely for this study will be referred to as Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020.

Table 5. Response to Survey Question: How do You Self-identify?

How do you self identify?
215 responses

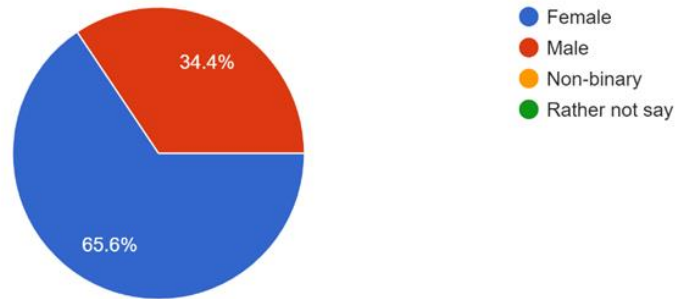


Table 6. Response to Survey Question: What is Your Age Group?

What is your age group?
141 responses

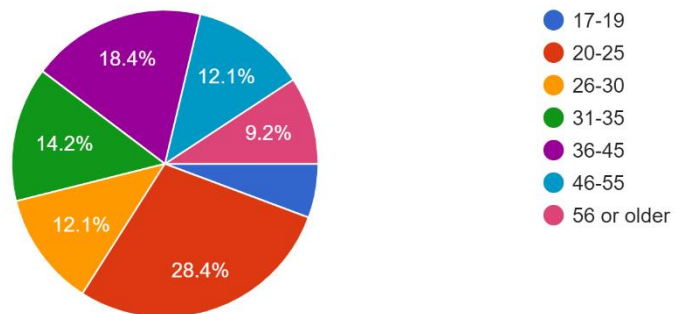


Table 7. Response to Survey Question: What is Your Class Standing?

What is your class standing?
103 responses

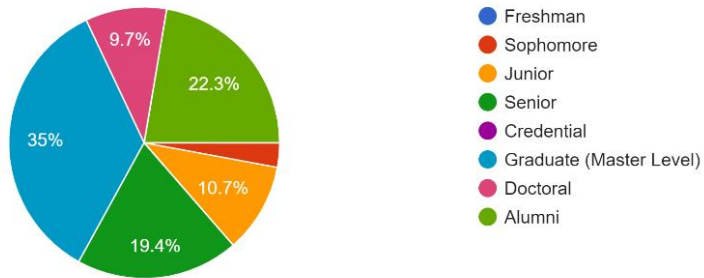


Table 8. Response to Survey Question: What College is Your Major in?

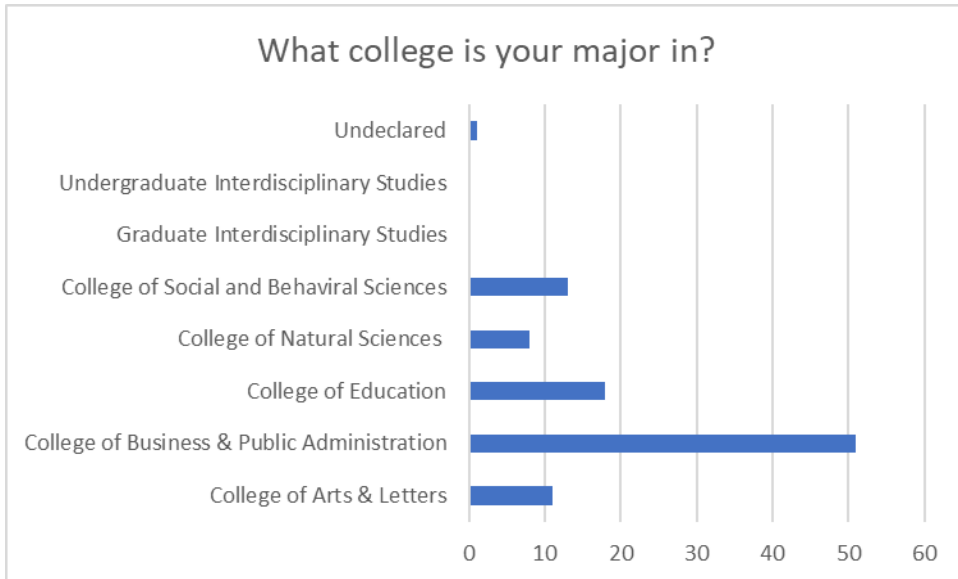


Table 9. Response to Survey Question: Do You Consider Yourself Latina?

Regarding your ethnicity, do you consider yourself a Latina? The term “Latina” is being used in the study to be inclusive of all ethnic backgrounds that identify with the Latino identity as a female.

103 responses

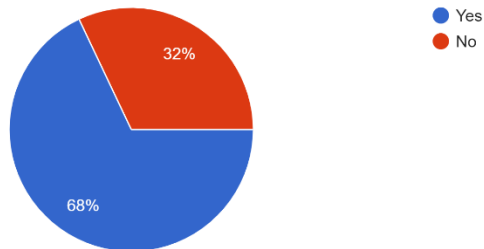


Table 10. Response to Survey Question: Are You the First in Your Family to Attend College?

Are you the first in your family to attend college?

70 responses

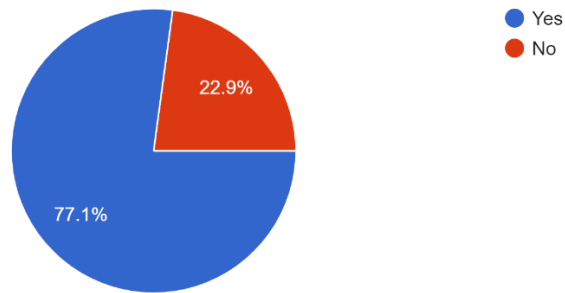


Table 11. Response to Survey Question: Are You First-generation in the United States?

Are you first-generation in the United States? In this study first-generation is defined as a student/alumnus with parents born outside of the Unit... is the first in their family to attend university.
54 responses

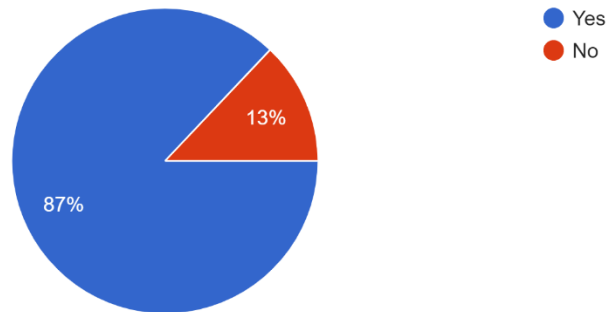


Table 12. Response to Survey Question: Do You Have Siblings?

Do you have siblings?
47 responses

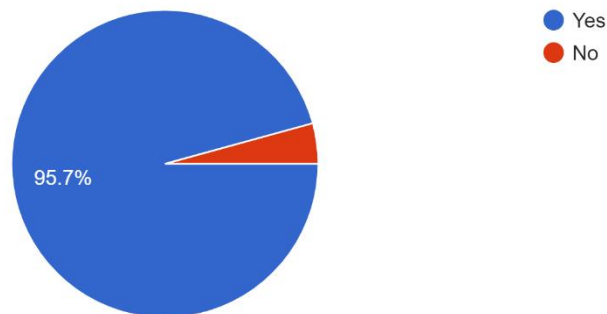
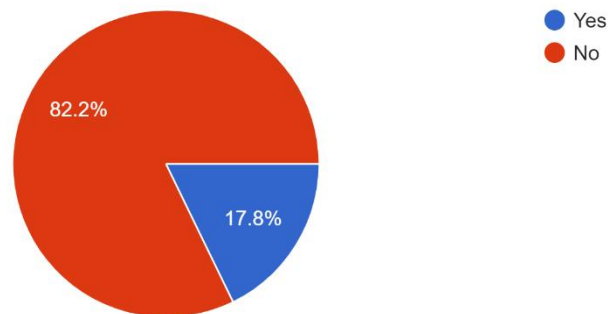


Table 13. Response to Survey Question: Are You Responsible to Care for Your Siblings?

Are you responsible to care for your siblings?

45 responses



Participants that responded that they are responsible for caring for their siblings shared examples of what those responsibilities entail. One participant shared that she is responsible to “look after [her] siblings on the weekends while both parents are working.” Another participant shared that;

Both parents work full-time, which limited their time to somewhat take care of my siblings. One sibling attends college, and [the] other is still in high school. I have to coordinate times [with] my sibling that attends college in order to pick her up from school and then take her to work. My youngest sister attends band at her school and sometimes gets out late, which leads me to pick her up from school (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

One participant takes on a more significant role as a sibling and shares that she is like a third parent in the family; she writes, “I am almost like another parent to my younger siblings since I’m the oldest sibling out of four children. I help my parents as much as I can, and I’m always either helping them with their school work or taking them to school” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

According to Sy & Romero (2008), Latinas are tasked with family obligations that their peers are not tasked with—for example, helping with the home, taking care of siblings, and once older making financial contributions to the family income. Lopez (1995) found that Latinx students are faced with unique challenges such as family and financial responsibilities, which serve as barriers in their academic success. These examples go hand in hand with the literature on family obligations and the link to familismo. As previously discussed, familismo is a cultural value that emphasizes the standing of strong family loyalty, closeness, and underwriting to the wellbeing of the family, extended family, and relationship networks (Sy & Romero, 2008).

Table 14. Response to Survey Question: What is the Highest Level of Education for Your Mother?

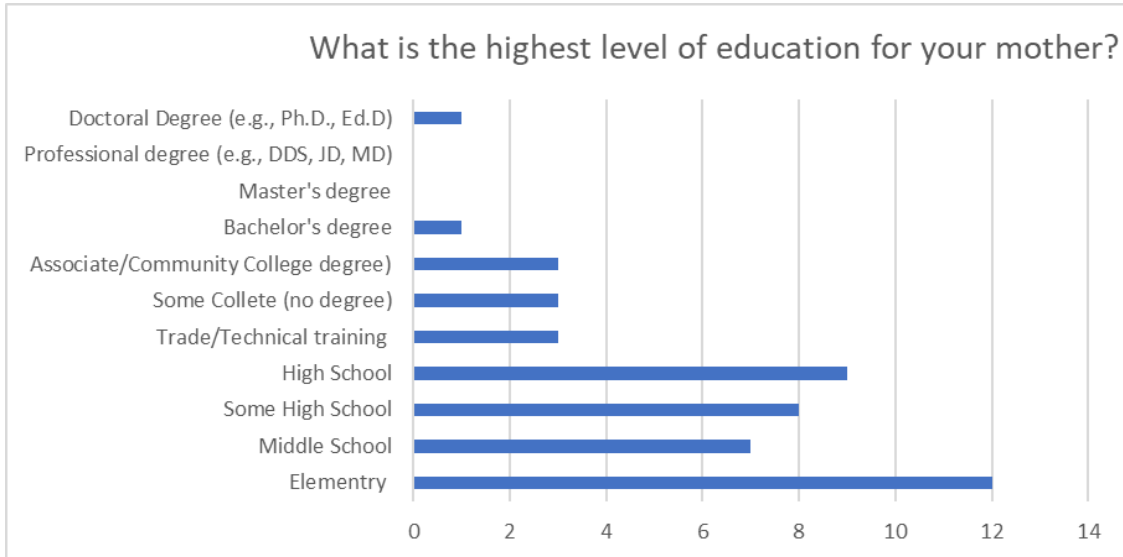


Table 15. Response to Survey Question: What is the Highest Level of Education of Your Father?

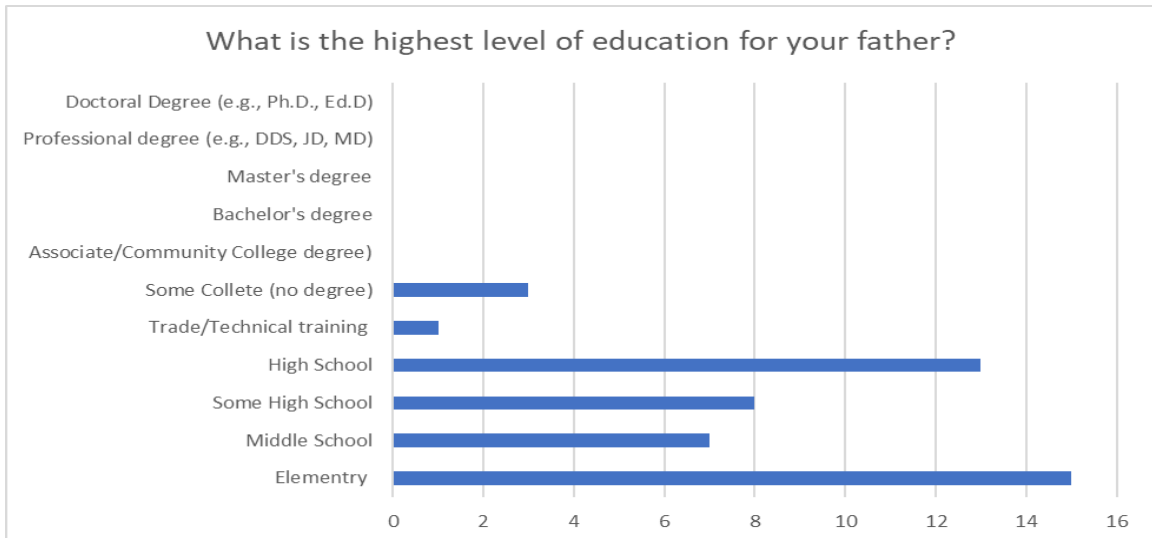


Table 16. Response to Survey Question: What is Your Current Living Situation?

What is your current living situation?

47 responses

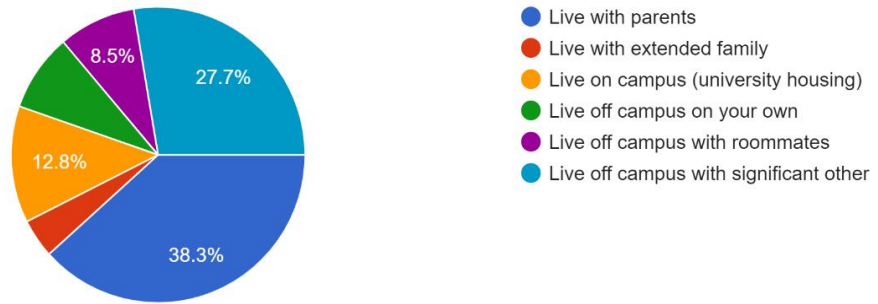
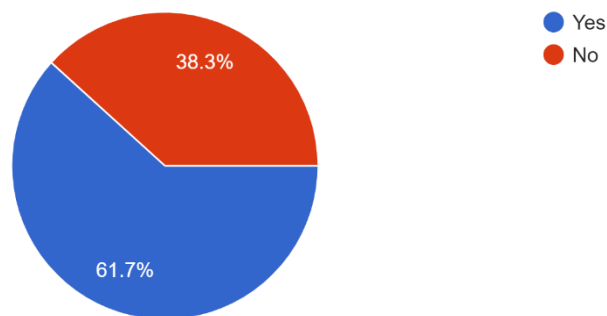


Table 17. Response to Survey Question: Are You Required to Contribute Financially to Your Family Household?

Are you required to contribute financially to your family household?

47 responses

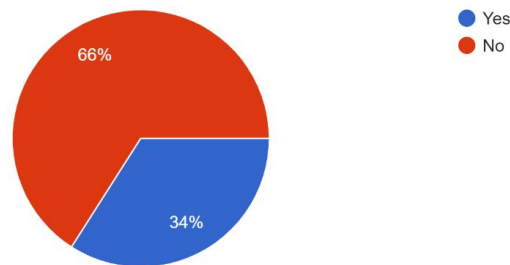


Participants that responded that they are responsible for contributing financially to their family household shared examples of what those responsibilities entail. One participant wrote, “I help with giving a specific amount of money each [month], for example, the month of January I’ll give my parents at least \$300 to help with any bill” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020). Another participant shared, “help with my mom's healthcare because she does not get free healthcare” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020). Lastly, one individual shared, “I currently have three jobs, and I usually give one whole check to my parents for food and anything else we need. I pay the phone bill for the house and other necessary things” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

These examples go hand in hand with the literature on the financial obligations that Latinas have while being a part of the family network. According to Lopez (1995), Latinx students are faced with the challenge of helping their family with financial responsibilities that, in turn, serve as blockades in their academic career. At times causes these students to drop out and seek alternative lifestyles such as early employment, military service, or parenthood rather than continuing with their education (Lopez, 1995).

Table 18. Response to Survey Question: Do You Have a Mentor?

Do you have a mentor?
47 responses

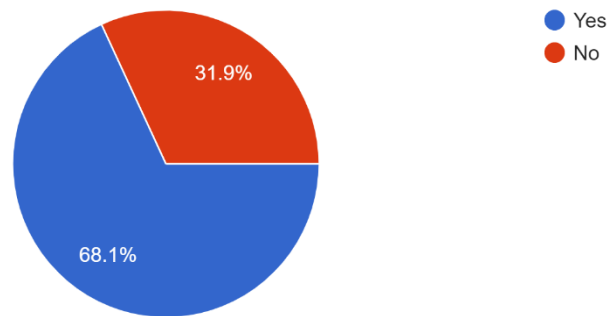


According to Lyon et al. (1990), “mentoring can play an important part in the growth of a...student. The belief that a particular member/agent of change is taking an interest in a student’s progress leads that student to feel better about [their] academic experience” (Lyon et al., 1990, p.284). The individuals who responded to this question are all first-generation Latinas. Returning to the literature, it is prudent to note that mentorship plays a vital role in a student’s academic career and personal growth (Ceja, 2006; Lyon et al., 1990). A mentor is not only found in the university setting but at home as well. Considering that these individuals are first-generation, they do not have the privilege of turning to a family member for advice. Ceja (2006) found that students without a mentor also did not have support or limited support at home during the college choice process.

Table 19. Response to Survey Question of Seeing a Familiar Face at the Professor Level.

In your college experience have you had a professor that shares your ethnicity/gender?

47 responses



Participants that responded that they have had a professor share their ethnicity/gender shared examples of the impact it made on their academic career. One participant wrote,

She understood how difficult it was for me to be in a [graduate] program and have parents who did not understand that I was in school and working on assignments all the time. My parents took pride in knowing I'm a doctoral candidate but had no idea the work it meant, and they pressured me to attend parties and events that were not of my interest or priority, and she understood how I felt (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

Many of the participants shared that they felt a sense of encouragement and motivation in that seeing a familiar face as a professor helped reassure themselves that “if they could do it, I could do it” or “it shows that my major isn’t just for men. Women ARE a part of it.” The impact of seeing a familiar face is a grand one as one participant shared,

Having a professor that I shared my ethnicity and/or gender made me feel comfortable going to them. Not to say, I could not go to professors outside my ethnicity or gender. However, as a first-generation Latina it was very pleasing to share my experiences and being able to connect with those who were similar to me. It was also very fulfilling to know that those who were like me were in a position that I aspire to (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

Another participant shared that while she had female professors, none of which shared her ethnicity

In my college career, I do not remember having any Latinas as my professors. Yes, many were female, but the majority were Caucasian. I don’t think I had ever really considered this, but perhaps having a Latina professor and mentor would have been extremely helpful. Perhaps a Latina professor would have better understood some of the struggles attempting to complete a college career coming from our cultural background and, also, from being female. Because being Latino is one struggle, and being a Latino female is a different struggle on its own

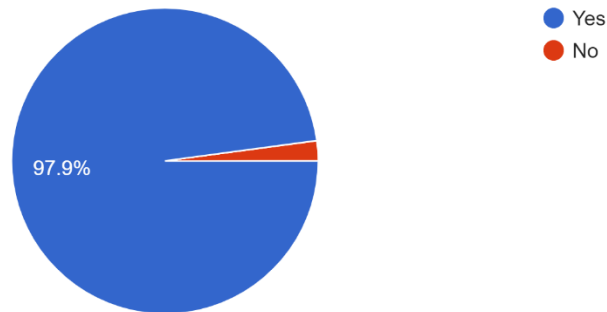
coming from a family from my cultural background (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

Many of the participants shared that there is a sense of comfort in seeing a fellow Latina or Latino as a professor. They believe that they can speak to these professors about the challenges. They would understand the culture and the pressure they were faced with without having to explain themselves further.

In correlation with the literature, Dayton et al. (2004) found that Latinx students are faced with cultural challenges, as many are first-generation college students. Furthermore, the role of faculty and staff at a Hispanic Serving Institution, such as the one the study took place at, is essential. In Dayton et al., (2004) study, participants shared they would like to see more agents of change from a Hispanic background while others shared, they wanted someone that would be able to be kind and understanding. This response is mirrored in the responses shared by the participants in the study during the first phase of the data collection. Finding a familiar face is still vital for a student to feel comfortable in a university setting.

Table 20. Responses to Survey Question: Are You Aware that Your University has Graduate School?

Are you aware that your university has graduate school? In this study graduate school is defined as the master level
47 responses



Participants that responded that they are aware that their university has graduate school options shared examples of how they first became aware of graduate school. One participant wrote, “I had to look it up online and go to an information meeting with the department” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

Another participant wrote,

I became aware of graduate school through peers and emails sent from my undergraduate institution. My advisor also gave me information, but it was aimed at law school since that was my original plan when I first began looking into continuing my education (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

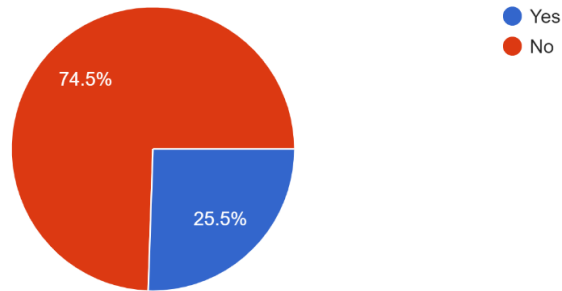
Many of the participants shared that they found the information on their own either by “researching the school website” “I looked into it myself.” While the majority of the participants were aware of graduate school at their institution, the question remains as to why the number of Latinas at the graduate level is low compared to other non-Latinx women (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

In returning to the literature, Contreras & Contreras (2015) indicated that access is not the issue as there are many open institutions throughout the United States which students can attend. While these individuals are aware their university has graduate school, the question remains as to why they are not applying. Ramirez’s study (2011) found in the literature review shares that awareness is not the issue but rather the barriers during the application process, institutional abuse, and standardized testing. While the majority of the respondents were aware of graduate school being offered at their institution, they were not asked if they were faced with barriers such as the GRE or the application process.

Table 21. Response to Survey Question Related to the Cost of Graduate School.

Are you aware that graduate school can cost as low as \$14,500 for the whole degree?

47 responses



Participants that responded that they were aware of the cost of graduate school shared how they first became aware of the cost. Many of the individuals share that they shared by researching the cost of graduate school on their own, and others realized the cost after they applied to graduate school.

Table 22. Response to Survey Question: Are You Aware that You can Apply to Graduate School Outside of Your Current College/Major?

Are you aware that you can apply to graduate school outside of your current college/major?
47 responses

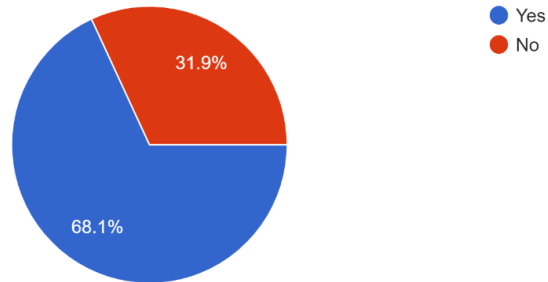
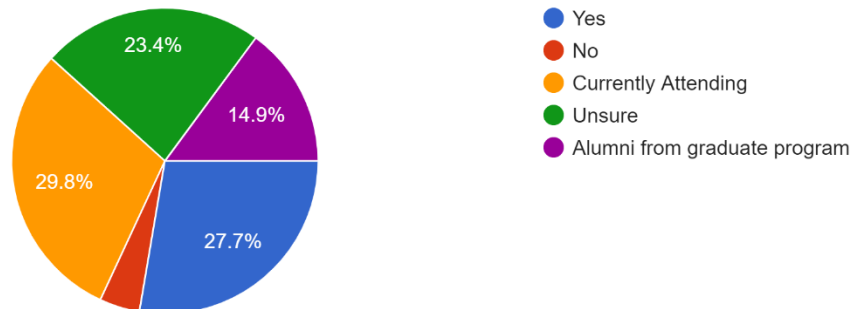


Table 23. Response to Survey Question of Attending Graduate School.

Do you plan to apply to graduate school? As a reminder, in this study graduate school is defined as the master level.

47 responses



Participants that responded that they were going to apply to graduate school shared that they were planning to do so as it would provide them “more stability,” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020) “wanted more information and education,” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020) “a masters is required for the career I hope to have,” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020) “because I want a better future for my family,” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020) “it is required to get a good job in my specific concentration,” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020) and “I want to be the first one in my family and create a path for my future generations” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

The two participants that responded that they do not plan to apply to graduate school shared, “I’m finding out we make more money working in multi-level marketing” and “I would like to find a job in my field first” (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020). Participants that are unsure if they will apply to graduate school shared that that cost of graduate school was a significant factor in their decision not to apply. An example of this response is as follows:

Graduate school is expensive. I won't go unless I'm assisted with the cost. The imbalance of income/debt ratio is something I fear after grad school. It's common and rising in California. Too many degrees and little value they seem to have today. You're either rich, middle class (poor but wealthy to the government to pay everything) or poor. I don't want to get into debt to become a poor 'middle class.' The grad school degree is supposed to

help me move forward not backwards (debt causes future financial issues, such as not being able to buy a house, having deductions, and basically be able to afford nothing). I'm debt-free at [University] with a bachelor's degree and I feel lucky for that. I also want to be sure of what I want to pursue if I'm going to invest a lot. I want to be an English teacher. Rumors say districts do not hire applicants with master's degree's because of increased pay (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

Another response was, "I am unsure because I am going to get my teaching credential after college and will soon determine if graduate school is an option for me." One participant shared her uncertainty with her response being, "I am not sure about my options. I see many women around me completing their master's degree within 2 to 3 years, but these are very intelligent women. I'm unsure if I would even be accepted into a program or which program I would select when applying." A similar response from a participant is "My mind is in a constant tug of war. In one moment, I feel confident that I can get into graduate school and complete my master's degree, but the next moment I second guess myself and convince myself that I may not be smart enough for that level." Lastly, one participant wrote, "I don't have a mentor to teach me how to apply or get prepared for graduate school" (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

Of the participants that responded that they are currently attending or alumni from a graduate program, they shared their reasons for applying.

Examples of participant responses:

Table 24. Currently Attending Graduate School Survey Responses

“I want to have a comfortable life that I am in control of, and more education opens more opportunities and better jobs and benefits.”
“To obtain a master’s degree was always my goal. I wanted to go after I got my BA but had to wait a few years.”
“Because it was aligned with my undergrad degree meaning that my masters required a bachelor's in a similar major and they accepted my current bachelor's. I basically didn't want to have to get another bachelor's in order to do my masters. Also, I found my niche in education. So it worked out well.”
“I want to further my education and receive better job opportunities.”
“I applied to graduate school to become a professional. My parents didn’t have an education and being the oldest sibling is a lot of pressure. I want to succeed in life and have a career in order to provide for my parents. Having a masters degree will be a personal goal. I don’t know any Latinas with masters degrees and I want to break that.”
“I was not getting the jobs that other non-Hispanics were receiving, while I felt I was being overlooked because of being a woman and Hispanic. I was also being looked down upon because I had no upper hand on them, so I wanted something that they did not have (and I love education, I really do love it).”
“I believe that having a graduate degree will open better opportunities versus just a BA.”

(Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020)

Table 25. Alumni of Graduate Program Responses

“First to do so in my family. Needed to advance in work setting.”
“I decided to apply for graduate school because my undergraduate degree, BA in Philosophy, was limited in career options. I majored in Philosophy because I really enjoyed it but the career opportunities were not as abundant as a business major.”
“Better employment opportunities.”
“I wasn't ready for the real world and since I'd been a student since the age of 3, I figured I should keep going to school post BA.”

(Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020).

One on One Interview Results

Of the 215 survey participants, 54 self-identified themselves as first-generation Latinas and met the following parameters:

- Latina
- Female
- Between the age group of 20-45
- Hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or be in the last year of their undergraduate program
- Hold a graduate degree or currently in a graduate program
- First-generation (Students/alumni with parents born outside of the United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That student (descendant) is the first to be born in the United States to parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university).

Of those 54 participants, 45 individuals were willing to sit down for a one-on-one interview to share their academic stories. The 45 individuals were broken down in three groups a) Latinas who are either current undergraduate students or alumni that hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree and have not applied to graduate school, b) Latinas who are currently in graduate school and c) Latinas who are alumni from a graduate program. Once these individuals were divided into subgroups, the individuals to be interviewed were then selected at random.

Table 26. Level of Education for Interviewed Participants

Participant	University Affiliation
Elizabeth	Alum with Bachelor of Arts in Accounting
Alice	Alum with Bachelor of Arts in Healthcare Management
Stephanie	Current undergraduate – Child Development and Psychology
Christina	Current undergraduate – Management with a concentration in Human Resources
Emma	Current Graduate student – School Psychology
Lily	Current Graduate student – Public Administration
Roxanne	Current Graduate student – Science and Health Services Administration
Marisca	Current Graduate student – Health Service Administration
Lupe	Graduate Alum – General Experimental Psychology
Rosemary	Graduate Alum – Educational Leadership Career Technical Education with a focus in Special Education

At the beginning of the interview, all participants were asked to share the last grade completed for their mother, father, and siblings. Table 25 shows the family educational background for each family member for the participant. Each participant is the first in their family to attend college regardless of the birth order.

Table 27. Family Education Background for Interview Participants

Participant	Mother	Father	Siblings
Elizabeth	Elementary	Elementary	Brother – High School Brother – High School

Alice	Some High School	Middle School	Brother – High School Brother – Currently in High School Brother – High School
Stephanie	Elementary	Middle School	Sister – University undergraduate Sister – Currently in High School Sister – Currently in Elementary
Christina	Middle School	Middle School	Brother – Attending Community College Sister – Associate Degree
Emma	High School	Elementary	Sister – High School Sister – High School Brother – High School
Lily	High School	Middle School	Sister – University undergraduate Sister – Currently in High School
Roxanne	Associate Degree	High School	Brother – Associate Degree
Marisca	High School	High School	Brother – University undergraduate
Lupe	High School	High School	Sister – High School Stepbrother – Bachelors
Rosemary	Technical School (Mexico)	Elementary	Brother – Military Bother – Some High School

The interview process of the data collection phase generated nineteen codes. Those codes were then additionally cultivated into eight categories, as found in Table 26. The coding process was linked by themes that emerged from each research question. For the first cycle of coding, Descriptive Coding was used. According to Saldaña (2016), “Descriptive Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, ethnographies, and studies with a wide variety of data forms” (p. 102). Considering phase two of the data collection is in the form of interviews, Descriptive Coding works well concerning the form in which the information was collected.

Descriptive Coding was used to summarize in a word or short phrase the topic of the passage of the qualitative data which was collected (Saldaña, 2016). Once codes were established, for the second phase of the cycle, Pattern Coding was used, which aligns with Descriptive Coding, which was used in the first phase. Saldaña (2016) shares that “Pattern Coding could be used as the sole second cycle method or serve in conjunction with Elaborative or Longitudinal Coding” (p.235). Concerning this study, Pattern Coding will be used as the sole second cycle method to complete the coding cycle. From the first nineteen codes, eight categories were generated with the use of Pattern Coding. The categories were then drilled down further to reveal three themes in correlation to the theoretical underpinnings, which are critical race theory, feminist theory, and validation theory.

Table 28. Codes, Categories, and Themes Found from Qualitative Data

Code	Category	Themes	Frq.
Sibling Support	Family Support		8
Parental Support			15
Significant Other Support			12
Mentor	Mentorship	Validation	59
Motivation	Motivation		46
Doing something important			13
Education Aspirations			49
Pride			6
Desire to succeed			40
Family Education	Family Education	Critical Race	22
Birth Order		&	15
Discussion of Education		Feminist	31
Challenges	Challenges		59
Family Obligations/Expectations			21
Lack of Familiar Face		Validation	16
Career Path	Career Path		34
Planning for the Future			28
Peer Support	Peer Support		13
Finding a Familiar Face	Finding a Familiar Face		22

Family and Cultural Experiences

The children of Latinx parents have family obligations that are not standard for others from different backgrounds. According to Sy & Romero (2008) Latinas, “more often fulfilled family obligations than did European American or Asian American adolescents” (p. 215). Many of the times, the responsibilities which Latinas are faced with both as children and young adults

are serving as a family translator, helping with the home, taking care of siblings, and at an older age, making financial contributions to the family income (Sy & Romero, 2008). This study sought to understand these responsibilities and asked: In what ways if any, do family and cultural experiences influence the academic pathways for first-generation Latinas? During the interview, process research participants were asked the following questions to be able to obtain an answer to this question. The questions were:

- Was higher education talked about in your home growing up?
- Did your parents have expectations of you with regard to higher education?

These questions were asked to all ten participants regardless of their affiliation with the university. Roxanne a current graduate student with an older brother and the only daughter shared that higher education was not discussed in her home growing up she shared:

...my mom wanted me to go to college, but I think it wasn't a big deal.

They really didn't discuss college with me, it wasn't until I got into sports and I played softball for my high school, and I was really good and so they said that I had an opportunity to get a scholarship, but I wasn't aware of like when to apply, how to get looked at, and so I kind of missed out on that opportunity (Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

Elizabeth, an alum from the university with a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting shared a similar experience, she shared "Both of my biological parents, while I

was in Mexico, they provided me shelter and education. However, they never expected me to go far in education, and I don't think. I think for... based on their upbringing if you made it out to high school, you made it" (Personal communication, February 4, 2020). At the age of fourteen, Elizabeth was adopted to a family in the United States. She is the oldest of three and the only daughter. The experience she had with her adopted parents was similar to her biological parents; "With my adopted parents... it was just not that she expected anyone not to have an education, but we were very family-oriented, did things together. We'd work on homework. We work on chores in the house, but they never really push to go after high school to... let's go to college now. That was something more optional, even with her own kid" (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Stephanie, a current undergraduate, majoring in Child Development and Psychology shared that in her home higher education was discussed in some form, she disclosed

Kind of, in a way, my parents never really talked about like going to college, going to a four year. I don't even think like community college was brought up. The only thing that was brought up in the household was trying to get like a better job than where they're at now. So they do like custodial or like housekeeping. So they just wanted us to do something that wasn't at that level, something higher. But in terms of college or university was never really mentioned while I was growing up. I think it

was just maybe lack of knowledge (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

While Stephanie's parents did not outright discuss college, she felt that with the advice her parents could share, they were pushing her to do more and achieve more, which led her to college. She does not believe that the lack of higher education discussion was because they did not support that route but rather because her parents did not have that information available to them. According to Ceja (2006), "given their first-generation status, the information and resources necessary to make decisions about college may not always be available to them within the home environment" (p.87). In his study, "Understanding the Role of Parents and Siblings as Information Sources in the College Choice Process of Chicana Students," he found the parents of the participants in his study were limited in the support they could provide during college choice process.

Alice, an alum with a Bachelor of Arts in Healthcare Management and the only daughter with three brothers, shared a similar experience when asked, did your parents have expectations of you with regards to higher education? She shared:

They instilled it on us. My dad growing up, he would always say, you could work like me, having a hard labor job, not have any holidays off or very few holidays, just Christmas, but not Christmas Eve. Work on weekends and stuff like that. Or you could work like your mom in an office where it's warm inside, or it doesn't have to do with being outside all the time and

dealing with harsh conditions (Personal communication, February 3, 2020).

Similar to Alice, Lupe, a graduate alum with a master's in General Experimental Psychology, shared, "The expectation for education for me was that I needed to graduate high school and then continue. But I didn't understand what that meant. And neither did they because both of them had just reached a high school level of education" (Personal communication, February 10, 2020). Lupe is the second daughter and one of three children to her parents who came to the United States from El Salvador. Her parents knew that high school was a must in the United States and knew there was more after, but they did not understand and were unsure, what they were sure of is that they wanted a better education for Lupe. She was able to find the support she needed in high school through a program called Gear Up.

Marisca, a current graduate student in the Health Service Administration program, shared the expectations of higher education and the support she receives from her parents:

They tell us, "if you want to do your masters, do the masters because we want you to succeed in life. We don't want you depending on no one. Just depend on yourself and God." And they want us to prosper and just be better people. They don't want us to be stuck to the same chain as their family members that just stop after high school and just went straight to

work. They wanted us to break that cycle (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Marisca is the oldest and only daughter to her parents. She has a younger brother who has followed her example of attending college and working towards a degree. Her parents, while they are not familiar with the college process, support her decision to obtain a graduate program. Her parents want more for her and her brother. They do not want them to look for a job straight out of high school but to break the cycle that her family has grown used to.

In differing ways, research participants expressed how higher education was discussed in their home growing up and what was expected of them by their parents and, in one case, adopted and biological parents. What is similar in all cases is that these Latinas had at least one parent that supported them in their choice to obtain an education after high school. What is also similar is that these Latinas all had a support system at home that wanted more for them and wanted them to break the cycle of hard labor.

In-Class and Out-of-Class Experiences

“Latinas are making progress, and in some cases, extraordinary progress” (Gándara, 2015, p. 5), the decade after 2003, Latinas have increased their high school graduation rate by more than 14 percent. These women have risen steadily in college degree attainment by point five percentage points each year. What is then necessary to understand is that while these women are making progress, “Latinas have the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to

all women of other non-Hispanic racial groups combined” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). For example (see Table 1), for the 2015-2016 academic year, just nine-point nine percent of master’s degrees were earned by Latinas compared to fifteen percent for Black women and sixty-five percent of white women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). It is vital to understand what motivates Latinas to apply to graduate school. This study sought to understand these experiences and asked: In what ways, if any, do in-class and out-of-class experiences influence the academic pathway to graduate school for first-generation Latinas? During the interview, process participants were asked the following questions to be able to obtain an answer to this question. The questions were:

- Why did you personally choose to attend college?
- Why did you apply to graduate school? (Current graduate students or graduate alumni only)
- What helped you through your graduate program? (Current graduate students or graduate alumni only)
- Do you have, or have you had a mentor?

Half of these questions were asked to only current graduate students and alumni from graduate programs. These questions were designed to understand why these women applied to their graduate program and what helped them through the process. The goal of asking these questions was to understand better why these women made the decision to apply to graduate school and then

what helped them be successful. The other two questions were asked of all participants to understand what experiences led them to graduate school and what could lead others to graduate school.

Applying to College

Emma, a current graduate school in School Psychology, shared that she first applied to college because she had so much time on her hands and felt the need to accomplish something more and thus began her academic career in community college. She later then chooses to apply to graduate school because she wanted more for her future. She came to this realization when working as a teacher's aide,

The teacher I used to work with, she kind of pushed me to talk to other professionals within the school unit, and it just made me more aware of the types of jobs that were out there. I knew I liked to work in the school setting. I knew I didn't want to be a principal. I knew I didn't want to be a teacher, and that's how I found school psychology. The teacher that I worked with, she motivated me to talk with those who I worked with other than the students and herself (Personal communication, February 8, 2020).

Ceja (2006) discusses the importance of a "protective agent" when seeking information on higher education. With Emma, the teacher she was working with took an interest in her and so began a conversation of furthering her education to be able to accomplish more. Discussions such as these are critical out-of-class

experiences that help support students in thinking outside the box. Emma knew the areas she did not want to work in but was not familiar with all of the areas of employment available to her. It was due to that “protective agent” taking an interest in her future that lite the fire inside Emma to think about her future. When asked if she had a mentor, Emma felt this “protective agent” was her mentor. “One I would consider [a mentor is] the teacher I worked with, she was Filipino, she was female, and she had her Master’s in Education” (Personal communication, February 8, 2020). Emma’s mentor sought her out and encouraged her to want more. Emma shared how her mentor encouraged her, ...over time [she shared her story] to motivate me to say [that she came from another country and I] should be able to do it in [my] own country. Why aren’t you? Why aren’t you just doing this? You clearly have a good record with these children, you know how to talk to them, you can do more with that she would tell me. It was just that motivation... (Personal communication, February 8, 2020).

Once in graduate school, what helped Emma through her graduate program were her peers. The literature does not discuss the importance of peer support. Additional research completed after the literature review for this study finds importance in peer support. According to McLaughlin & Sillence (2018), students benefit from specialized support from peers dealing with similar academic challenges. Furthermore, they share that institutions need to be aware that graduate students hold a set of personal priorities that differ from undergraduate

students, and so require a different support system such as peer networks.

Emma shared her experience with support from her peers,

I met a lot of good, supportive peers [in the cohort]. You're able to talk through whatever struggles you're going through in the program you go through together, and then you form that relationship with them, and you're able to talk with them about the stuff you're going through at home too. I feel like forming those relationships and having a sense of support was really good for me at that time, and at that time, that support wasn't something that I had at home (Personal communication, February 8, 2020).

Lily, a current graduate student studying Public Administration, is the oldest daughter of three. She is the trailblazer of her family and has inspired her sisters to continue with their education. She shares that she first applied to college because she wanted to have a better future for herself. She shares,

I guess being the oldest and seeing everything that happens around the house and seeing my parents struggle...I just wanted to have a better future for myself and for my family. Whatever I get from college and whatever job I get; I could also help my parents out in the future. I don't want to see them struggle all the time and that's what motivated me to go to college just to get a better job (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Lily later choose to apply and attend graduate school because she did not feel confident with her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish. She was working in the public sector and did not think that she was well equipped with the knowledge to be successful as a translator, which was initially what she had planned for her career. Her career plan changed, and she decided to apply to graduate school based on her current place of employment. Lily shares,

So, when I was at the city then I thought, well why don't you apply for the master's program in public administration. That way I could, if I don't have the experience right now, I'm getting the experience with it at the same time I'm attending school. And then that way, once I apply for a higher position then I'll be, that will be better for me as well. Then I make myself feel better, like empowerment as well, like being a Latina and a first generation college student for my family...that felt really good just encouraging my younger siblings and also family members, like my younger cousins (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Similar to Emma, what helped Lily get through her graduate program has been peer support, along with the support of her parents. Lily is attending her graduate program with her best friend, and coincidentally they live on the same street. The peer support has helped Lily many ways, and she shares,

We've been helping each other with the homework and with the presentations, and just I guess just motivating each other [be]cause we know how hard it gets, and we have other friends that are always inviting

us out to hang out. We just stay focused in school, and then we just tell each other, we're going to get through this. We only have like a couple of months left. And I guess just motivation is what has been getting us through it because we also work full time and working full time and then going to school well at night and then having to wake up early again, then it's mentally draining and physically as well. But if you want to succeed and just got to pull through it some time (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

The support which Lily and Emma have help with the battle of loneliness and alienation. Lily shares in her experience having a peer that understands the struggles and requirements of graduate school helps her stay motivated. She also shares that it is difficult to put other relationships on hold while in graduate school and struggling with her bicultural identity.

Similar to Emma, Lily also obtained support from a “protective agent.” While working in the public sector, a Human Resource Director introduced herself during a training, “she said, well whoever needs mentoring or help with your resume or anything related stop by my office. I can help with anything I can” (Persona communication, February 12, 2020). Lily sought this individual’s guidance, and so began a mentorship that Lily has significantly benefited from.

Roxanne, a current graduate student in the Science and Health Services Administration program, was not as fortunate as Emma and Lily concerning mentorship. When asked if she had a mentor, she quietly and quickly said she

did not. She then clarified that “I don’t really ask for help, so that’s probably why I don’t have a mentor because I don’t know how to ask for help” (Personal communication, February 5, 2020). Marisca, a current graduate student in the Health Service Administration program, similarly, has had the same experience. When asked if she had a mentor, she responded disappointedly:

Unfortunately, I don’t have a mentor; I wish I did. I tried to look for mentors through these programs that they had here, like the student mentors. But just like everyone else, students, we're all busy. There's a certain timeframe we can meet with mentors. It's better just to talk to friends instead. At least they'll be there for you in their own free time. But I wish I had a mentor because at least it'll help me guide through some of the courses or give me advice on what professors expect from each student. That way I can at least know what to expect because my program has cohorts (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

According to Lyon et al. (1990), “mentoring can play an important part in the growth of a... student. The belief that a particular member/agent of change is taking an interest in a student’s progress leads that student to feel better about [their] academic experience” (p. 284). While Marisca does not have a mentor, she has attempted to obtain one, but the support was not available. What has helped her has been the cohort model, which in turn is peer support. Marisca states that she wants a mentor, and yet during the interview, it did not seem as

though she knew what a mentor was or how a mentor could help her in her journey.

Roxanne shared that she first applied to college “because of sports” (Personal communication, February 5, 2020). She played softball at a community college and the university level. She later gave up softball to commit solely to her studies as she found that she was not able to be a good student and an athlete. She later then chooses to apply to graduate school because of the career path that she wanted.

I did really enjoy the research. Research is something that I really like doing. I chose to stay within the lane of my passion, which is promoting health and I'm kind of combining it with what I do here, which is administrative work and I chose the health service administration degree. And that's when I knew that I still wanted to stay within the walls of the university but also try to get my foot into like a hospital. My goal is for UCLA Medical Center, so that's pretty much why I chose that degree (Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

As a graduate student, what is helping her is the support from her parents. While her parents have not been able to provide her support in academic guidance, they have been able to provide her with the support she needs. She shares,

My parents have been probably the biggest help. I still live at home, they allowed me to stay at home, and they don't really ask much of me. I help around with a couple of bills, but they want me to focus on school. It's kind

of cute that like when they know that my tests are around the corner if I ask them to leave for the day because I need peace and quiet when I'm studying, they'll leave. They really respect the hard work that I've put into my studies and yeah, my parents are probably what have been keeping me going and a big part of...they've been a big help. And then, I mean, I don't really ask my graduate coordinator for any help. Maybe some peers, but it's mostly been all me (Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

Marisca shared that she first applied to college because she wanted a better education and, in turn, wanted to have a better career she did not "...want to be stuck doing work for the rest of my life and not have a backup" (Personal communication, February 12, 2020). She later then chooses to apply to graduate school for very similar reasons as to why she first decided to attend college as an undergraduate,

The reason why I wanted to apply to graduate school is because I wanted to do something better with my life. I wanted something more. I feel like the Bachelor's, no offense to those who did bachelor's and just stay there, I just wanted something more out of my life. I feel like the masters will help me complete that, and I can be able to financially help out my parents in some way. Because they gave so much and the master's, it is not cheap (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Similar to Roxanne, what has helped Marisca the most has been the support from her parents.

...my parents, they're like right there, 100%. And they just want me to succeed, and they just remind me. They always tell me, "This is truly worth it for your life because we want you to succeed. We don't want you to depend on no one (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

While Roxanne and Marisca have not had mentors, they have had the support of their parents. The literature shows that while parents of Latinx students at times are limited in the help, they can provide during the college choice progress. The emotional support that Latinx parents can provide and is essential to students. This is evident with Roxanne and Marisca. While they do not have mentors, they do have the support of their parents, which in turn is a motivation to accomplish their academic goals.

Race, Class, and Gender

Participants in this study shared the importance of finding a familiar face in either their peers or professors. Dean et al. (2009) found that not only are women underrepresented in higher-level positions, but minorities face more challenges with the glass ceiling effect. Minority women are faced with more obstacles than white women. Minority women are faced with two significant drawbacks; they are women, and they are not white. While women have been chipping away at the glass ceiling slowly by leaving behind their traditional norms and obtaining more education (Mills-Strachan et al., 2009). This study sought to understand: In what ways, if any, do race, class, and gender play a part in the lives of these women and their educational goals. During the interview, process research participants

were asked the following questions to be able to obtain an answer to this question. The questions were:

- When is the first time you took a course in which the professor shared the same ethnicity as you? Did this have an effect on you?
- What has been the greatest challenge for you in your academic career? What helped you overcome this challenge?

All research participants were asked these questions to understand better how to best support Latinas. The first question relates to the glass ceiling effect and if finding a familiar face (e.g., Latina) as a professor have any impact on them. At the same time, we learn how the lack of familiar faces affects them. The second question seeks to understand the challenges these women are faced with. The literature discusses that Latina students are faced with numerous challenges such as poverty, education, family and financial obligations, and biculturalism.

Finding a Familiar Face or Lack Thereof

Elizabeth, an undergraduate alum, shared that she had not had a professor that shared the same ethnicity as her. When asked if this affected her, she shared

It has an effect in that sense that I...and it's interesting you asked me that because I was thinking about it the other day. I see a lot of celebrities who are in the business show or maybe in the politics, but I always think it was like, okay, what does it take? Why is it that only few people, few of us, go

this far? What does it take? And I don't have kids myself. I don't know if because maybe having a family becomes a priority. I don't know. For me, it's one of my goals in addition to being a mentor to others is to become a teacher. Maybe I will be teaching tax law. I don't know (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

She plans to be the familiar face that Latinx students find in the future, and once she obtains her graduate degree and spends time in the corporate realm will return to her alma mater to teach accounting courses. For her, it is frustrating that in her area, there are not many familiar faces. Recently when attending an event, she said

I did not see that much of a mixture of ethnicities...the majority was Caucasian. There was a small group of African Americans, a small group of Asians. And I don't recall seeing that many, other than us as students, my colleague and myself, I don't remember seeing Hispanic people on the floor. And I don't know why that is. Everybody talks about how difficult passing the CPA exam is. It's almost like the bar exam. I think if you set your mind to it, it's possible (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Cristina, a current undergraduate student, studying Management with a concentration in Human Resources, could not recall if she had ever had a Latinx professor. The lack of a familiar face as a professor has affected her. She shares;

Just having someone that you kind of look up to, having the same background as you really does help. I feel like it would be someone that I can possibly reach out to after class and feel a little bit more comfortable. Whereas compared to a white man, professor, I don't think I would be as comfortable if it was maybe even a Hispanic male. Yeah. So, I definitely do think it does have an effect (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Lily, a current graduate student, shared that since she was a Spanish major during her undergraduate degree, she found a lot of familiar faces, but she knew that it was due to her major. Now, as a graduate student, she has had only one professor share her ethnicity. Her primary battle with the lack of familiar face with her peers. She has found that she does not see many Latinx students in her program. Lily shares the effect this has on her,

I wish there would be more of us in the classes. That way, being a Latino or Latina, we have so much potential to be in higher education. But I feel like sometimes the financial situations are hard for them or they don't have that support from probably their families. And also, since it takes up time as well. Like being in the program and taking more classes, it gets hard. So yeah, I wish there would be more in there. So, we could all succeed in the future. Because there's not many Latinos who have director positions or supervisor positions because within even the city or the county, I don't really see Hispanics having director positions, and that's what I aspire to

be like a director in the future. The reason that I want to be in the MPA program too [is] to be a director and be a mentor to any younger Latinas or Latinos in the future (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Similar to Elizabeth, Lily plans to be the familiar face for the Latinx population at the city and county level. She hopes to be a leader and hopes to mentor and be the change that is needed. Suarez et al. (1997) discuss the importance of finding a familiar face for the Latinx community and the Latinx student. Many of the times when these students do not find a familiar face, they are discouraged and find it more challenging to continue with their academic careers. Regardless of these challenges, students have found motivation in their own right and are able to understand the need to see someone with the same ethnicity accomplished.

Lupe, a graduate alum, shared that during her academic career, she has had predominantly white males and white female professors. She was confident that she had not had a Latinx professor her time as an undergraduate and graduate. Lupe then recalled there was one Latinx professor during her credential program. She shares,

There was one Hispanic male professor in my credential program. He's a school psychologist, a local school psychologist. It did [affect me], and actually, it was kind of still hard because he was a male and he was part-time. So, he wasn't even a full-time professor. I would say all the other professors were mainly white male; he was the one that I felt more comfortable going to when I had a question. He was one that actually

delivered the material a lot better. So, I learned a lot from him. His classes were well structure and meaningful. He definitely came with just a better, a different perspective, just the way he taught and spoke to us. He just created that learning environment that allowed us to feel comfortable around him. And just the fact that he was Hispanic, and bilingual made me realize... I think he was the one that mainly made me feel what an asset my bilingual piece was. The director when he met me, white male, he had mentioned how that would be important. But the Hispanic professor emphasized it even more (Personal communication, February 10, 2020).

As previously discussed, Lily, a current graduate student, majored in Spanish and found many familiar faces. The effect that this has had on her was positive. She discovered that she had a lot in common with her professors. She shared, "...it was a cool feeling because we had a lot of in common and as well as she's the first-generation college student from her family. So, I was able to correlate with that. And then she would also mentor us if we ever needed help with anything [be]cause our parents never really, they didn't attend college. She was there like an older sister but then also as a professor because I would also go to her office hours too" (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Rosemary, a graduate alum who studied Educational Leadership Career Technical Education with a focus in Special Education, shared that she had many professors during her undergraduate degree that shared her ethnicity. "Thank goodness I majored in Spanish, I guess because then I kind of saw the

role model of an aunt” (Personal communication, February 6, 2020). She recognizes that the reason she was able to find so many familiar faces was due to her major, Spanish. During her graduate degree, she also found familiar faces, but for her, it did not have a significant influence then as she was faced with many challenges, and what helped her was the support of her professors, regardless of ethnicity. Alice, an undergraduate alum had one professor during her program to share her ethnicity; she thought it was “super cool,” and it was “cool to see her there.” While Alice does not aspire to teach, she did feel that seeing a familiar face at the professor level was inspiring.

Stephanie, a current undergraduate, felt motivated to have a professor share her ethnicity since she never had a professor or teacher share her ethnicity, “I think ever since I was in high school, I never really had like a professor or a teacher that I could like, “Wow. Like she's doing this. Like I've never seen anybody really like have my background be held up in like a profession like this.” So, I guess in a just like looking up like, “Wow, like maybe I could do this someday,” or something like that. I'm really like resonated with me” (Personal communication, February 4, 2020). What helped her most in having a Latinx professor was how the professor was able to connect the topic (critical thinking) to her ethnicity.

What intrigued me in her class was like the way that she would put examples of like certain concepts in the class. She related back to like her ethnicity and her like Mexican descent. So that's when, yeah, like that's

when I really like knew. Okay. Like I could kind of connect with her and I know what she's talking about because I kind of have experienced that (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Emma, a current graduate student, shared that the first time she had a professor that shared her ethnicity was in her graduate program. While this had a positive effect on that, she felt that this professor of her culture understood her was understood, and most importantly, she felt comfortable. This was not the most significant influence in her academic career. What has helped her in feeling that she belongs is her peers,

I can't speak for other programs, but for sure with the one I'm in, I feel that the majority of us are of Hispanic descent, like a majority. I would say only three of 18 are white, and the rest are Hispanic. And I think that's telling, I think that we're either finding our place or we're getting more knowledge of how to get to these places. Maybe frustration with suppression, staying in the home, cooking these meals and taking care of the kids. Like no, I'm going to get out there and I'm going to do something more and I'll do that too (Personal communication, February 8, 2020).

Roxanne had a similar reaction to Emma. Where yes, she found a familiar face at the professor level, and it helped motivate her in passing. "I wasn't too familiar with his background but just from the outside like I did reflect and was able to recognize that if someone of my ethnicity can... he has a PhD. And actually, his Ph.D. is in entrepreneurship. So, he has his own clinic, and I just thought to

myself, "Well, if someone like him, like me, can go that far, then I can too"
(Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

Marisca first had a professor that shared her ethnicity and gender when she first transferred. The effect this interaction had on her was

It felt good, [be]cause at least I know it's possible to actually obtain that higher education. [Be]cause when I think about higher education...growing up, I feel like Hispanics aren't truly represented and seeing her I thought okay so we can do this, we can actually achieve what we want to do...it was nice to see someone who actually spoke the language, understood the language, and understand the family traditions, the values and moral that comes from Hispanic families (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

In various ways, research participants have had some interaction with a familiar face during their academic career. Dayton et al. (2008) found that many times Latinx students are faced with cultural challenges, and the role of faculty and staff at Hispanic Serving Institutions is essential. Similar to Dayton et al. (2008) study, these research participants want to see more agents of change from a Latinx background. If we want to continue to support this population, then Hispanic Serving Institutions should begin the process of helping students find familiar faces in administration, faculty, and staff.

Challenges Faced and the Battle

When research participants were asked: What has been the greatest challenge for you in your academic career? What helped you overcome this challenge? The outcome was linked with the literature, in that these women were faced with challenges such as poverty, education, family and financial obligations, and biculturalism. Emma, a current graduate student, shared her most significant challenges have been tending to her mental health and understanding that making time for herself to relax and decompress from the week is okay (Personal communication, February 8, 2020). What has helped Emma overcome these challenges has been the therapy. For Lily, another current graduate student shared her most difficult challenge, “has been living far from college. The commute at times is an hour and twenty minutes because of traffic. It’s more difficult now as a graduate student when classes get out at ten o’clock at night” (Personal communication, February 12, 2020). She goes on to share that she has also struggled with the cost of online fees. While she had no plans to take online course work, to stay on track with her graduation plans, she had no other choice. This meant that she would need to pay an additional \$360 per course (Academic year, 2020) each time the course she needed to stay on track was not offered in a face-to-face format. She shared her frustration “it’s actually hard sometimes when classes that I need to take are not offered on campus, and I need to take the online classes. So that means taking two online classes is over \$600, and to be able to pay that out-of-pocket, it gets hard”

(Personal communication, 12, 2020). Lily was able to overcome these challenges by not complaining anymore and “going with the flow” she understands she had to make the drive to attend class and has grown used to it. As for the additional fees, she sought assistance,

I have to do the payment plans, but it’s still a struggle because I never really thought I was going to have to take the online classes. The financial part is a struggle, but I’m overcoming it. Having the payment plans is the only way that I could get through it (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

Roxanne, a current graduate student, shared that time management has been the greatest challenge for her and to face that “school doesn’t come easy,” and she has to work hard for it (Personal communication, February 5, 2020). She has been able to overcome her time management challenge with the support of her significant other,

...what got me through this program and my undergrad is that I shared almost six years of my whole undergrad and almost my whole graduate program with the engineer. So, he did his program at San Diego State, and so being apart from him and seeing him struggle and seeing him push and get through his program really inspired me to just do the same. So just seeing him and the fact that we were apart because I feel like if we were together, I probably wouldn't have done as well as I've been doing because he'd be here. So just having that space to myself, but then again

that support. And someone who understands what I'm going through because my parents, they don't really understand what it's like, they know that I come home late and that I study a lot, but they don't really know what it takes" (Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

She goes on to share that she can accomplish more when she has pressure. So, while being a fulltime graduate student, she is working a full-time job at the university and a part-time retail job "that pressure also helped me get through the program" (Personal communication, February 5, 2020). She has had more difficulty overcoming her challenge with academics. Her struggle is she does not know how to ask for help and correlates this with her student status, "I just feel like because I'm in a graduate program I shouldn't be asking the questions that I'm thinking in my head" (Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

Marisca, another current graduate student, shared that her challenges have been the stress of being a graduate student and her family's health. "When you have stuff going on personal wise, it just makes you worry a little bit more and adds onto the stress. My mom, her health hasn't been good lately" (Personal communication, February 12, 2020). When asked Marisca what has helped her overcome these challenges she shares,

God, family, and friends. Because even though family, that's one of the reasons why I worry about my family. They're also there to remind me that you can do this. You got this, just breathe. That's all you've got to do, just breathe and take it one step at a time. And for God, I always pray to Him. I

try to pray to Him as much, and it's just like my stress feelings that I just talk to someone who I know will take control. And friends, they're just... That's your backup support system because they are going through it too. So, they understand the stress completely. It's nice to have someone to talk to in terms of, "we're all students here, we're all stressing out. We can do this." Study groups, all that stuff. And family, they're just there to remind you that you've got to keep going. Don't give up (Personal communication, February 12, 2020).

In interviewing alumni from graduate programs of the institution, Lupe shared, "What was difficult for me was the fact that I was bilingual. From a young age, Spanish was my first language. When I got into elementary school, I had only Spanish classes until fifth grade, and then they swapped me into English only. So, then I really developed this feeling of, I wasn't very confident in my writing skills, in my English. When I got to college, it was really hard for me to feel like I was confident in that sense of writing" (Personal communication, February 10, 2020).

What Lupe has and is experiencing is one of the many challenges which Latinx children face. Gándara (2010) discussed in her study how Latinx students, the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States is also the most poorly educated. The literature shares that Latinx children begin school significantly behind their peers or are held back due to their first language being Spanish. Lupe is an example of the disservice which the educational system does to our

bilingual students. Lupe is a now doctoral candidate who has been published in journals and chapters in books still struggles with her feeling of not being a good writer. She shares;

My writing has been my biggest challenge. And what's kind of tied into that is just my own self-talk, my mindset, they have been wrapped in one. And which is something that I currently still struggle with, and my current mentor tells me. I've always felt that I wasn't good enough, my skillset wasn't good enough, or I wasn't smart enough just because I had a different upbringing. And I don't know, it just always, it's kind of like I self-sabotage myself (Personal communication, February 10, 2020).

Lupe's challenge has followed her regardless of accolades and degrees. She is overcoming this lifelong challenge in that she has to "practice what I preach." Lupe now works with children in a community that have learning disabilities or have different barriers that they need to overcome, she is able to help these children overcome their challenges, and she continually asks herself "Why can't I take my own advice" (Personal communication, February 10, 2020).

Rosemary, an alum from a graduate program of the institution, faced challenges lined up with the literature concerning family obligations. According to Sy & Romero (2008), familismo is primarily emphasized in the Latinx community. Sy & Romero (2008) define familismo as a cultural value that stresses the standing of strong family loyalty, closeness, and underwriting to the wellbeing of the family, extended family, and relationship networks. This same cultural value,

familismo, requires family members to put the needs of the family first. This is especially true when a member of the family is required to make personal sacrifices. Due to this critical family value, Latinas experience a high rate of attrition to either drop out of college or stop their education to help their family and meet the family needs. During her graduate program, Rosemary was faced with familismo and tested her grit,

In 2006, 2007, I started my graduate studies in social linguistics, English for the TESOL masters, for English, and I had to drop because, in 2007 or 2008, the economy crashed. So, my husband was unemployed from one day to another. All the construction, everything was stopped. Teachers were being laid off left and right. In 2010 I go back to start again, and it was already hitting those five-year limitations. So, I decided to just go for special education since I felt like social linguistics was good, but I was working with a lot of adults with undiagnosed disabilities. So, I went ahead, and I started my special ed master's, and it was perfectly fine. Everything was good. I had a baby in 2010 as well, and everything was good. But here comes 2011, and my daughter gets diagnosed with congenital cataracts, which we already have in our family. The only difference with my little baby is that by the time she was 18 months, she was going blind. I had to withdraw, but once again, I was like halfway. In 2013, I went back, and everything is good. I'm about to finish. I want to say it was like fall 2013. And I'm taking it slow, but I'm about to finish. And in

2014, my father gets diagnosed with cancer. So here we go again. And I'm literally two classes away from finishing. And I have to withdraw again because my father was diagnosed with cancer, and within two months, he passed away. When I went back, I had to finish my classes and the thesis exam in April. My mom passes away in March. I'm like, no more leaves of absences I believe April 10th I took the comps and I passed (Personal communication, February 6, 2020).

Rosemary was able to accomplish the goal she set out for herself in 2006, but it was not an easy task for her. She was riddled with family obligations that needed her attention. This meant she had to put her studies on hold several times and commit herself to her family. While she had siblings being the only daughter meant she had to take on more responsibilities for her parents. Rosemary shares,

Being the only girl in the family, I was in charge of having to take care of my father and my mother...when my dad fell ill with cancer, I was the one taking care of him, dropping him off, talking to the doctors, picking him up, staying overnight at the hospitals. I was the one. Same thing with my mother. My brothers up to this day, it sounds kind of mean, but they don't even know the actual term of the type of cancer our parents had. I was in charge of ordering the medication that was specially delivered to my house. I had to move out of my small house and buy a bigger house just to accommodate my mother living with us. When they both passed, I had

to make sure that I did the funeral arrangements. So that's the obstacle, having to balance my family life as a responsibility of the Hispanic female figure. And I'm the youngest, so I totally see that and having to then take care of my parents. And all your community and all of your family, your immediate family, they expect you to take charge of that. So, they always offered, yet it was expected. So that was the biggest obstacle (Personal communication, February 6, 2020).

In interviewing current undergraduates and undergraduate alumni of the institution, they were faced with challenges related to balancing school and family obligations. Espinoza (2010) discusses the family obligations, which are critical for Latina adolescents and young adults. In her 2010 study she found that while these women are riddled with family and school obligations, they can learn and overcome these challenges twofold: 1) Communicating with their family the responsibilities they were faced with and 2) Separation, in that students would keep family and school detached to protect the family relationship, these students would put family before their studies. Elizabeth, an undergraduate alum, shared that her biggest challenge has been balancing life. When asked what she meant by "balancing life," she clarified that it was "home and school and work" (Personal communication, February 4, 2020). Similar to Rosemary, Elizabeth is challenged with the health of her mother and her mother in law. She shares,

We're currently taking care of both of our mothers, and then my husband's mother is battling cancer. She's in stage three or four. So that's been

challenging, because if he doesn't take the day off, then I have to step in and help out. And my mother is not in such a bad situation, but she doesn't drive, and she never learned the language. I assist with taking her to her doctor's appointments and things like that. That can be a little bit... it's not hard work. It's more overwhelming work because you get to take care of one thing or another. Then your day goes by fast (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

What has helped Elizabeth overcome the challenges of balancing life, work, and family has been learning to be strategy-oriented and have a plan and a backup for everything that she is responsible for. She keeps a calendar at home and a planner with her for everything that she must tend to. For her planning has helped her with her busy life.

Alice, a current undergraduate student, shared the "...greatest challenge is finding a balance between social life and still being professional and all of that in time" (Personal communication, February 3, 2020). What has helped Alice is to keep a planner and keeping track of her calendar on her phone. Her goal was always to make sure to complete all her tasks on time but still strived to have a social life. Alice shares, "Make sure I do my homework on time, make sure I can go to events on the weekends because I did my homework on time and stuff like that" (Personal communication, February 3, 2020). Stephanie, a current undergraduate, shared she faced many challenges her first year as a college student,

...coming into college as my first year, it was very confusing for me to navigate through the classes and the type of classes I should take and stuff like that. So, I remember my first year of college really. I didn't really know what kind of classes to take. I didn't seek out that first-year advisers and stuff like that. So, looking back that year, that entire first year basically in a way, at least for me went to waste because now that year could have been like being like completed my GEs or something like that. But because I wasn't aware of how to choose classes and how to do all of that, I kind of just took like random classes that weren't maybe like part of my GE or had already completed like one class out of the section. But taking like another one and stuff like that. But after that, I've also thought, the thought of going into the medical field, I decided to declare my major in biology. So, I took my first chemistry class, and I actually failed the class that first quarter. So that was also like a great challenge for me just because I didn't know also how to navigate, to go to professor's office hours and stuff like that (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

What then helped Stephanie overcome this challenge was learning how to manage her time best and connect with her advisor, a fellow Latina. "I connected a lot with my Latina advisor and her words of wisdom and stuff like that, telling me that everything's going to be worth it and like all this stuff, it's all going to be for the better" (Personal communication, February 4, 2020). The literature discusses the importance of a "protective agent" and how, and the first-

generation student needs the support to manage to get through their college experience. Stephanie, while she was faced with a challenging start, has since found the support she needed and has been able to be proactive in seeking help rather than reactive.

Cristina, a current undergraduate student at the institution, is facing the challenge of feeling alienated and isolated. Cristina shares,

I think my challenges, I want to get involved, but I just don't think I have any time, or I just don't know what the right place for me is. Because I just never felt like, oh, this club or this program is really meant for me. Even though I would want to join some kind of organization or club within college, I just never felt like it was there for me. I don't know. It's kind of weird. I want to be more involved with the school, but I just don't think, I just never thought. I have such a limited time to get involved, and so I feel a little bit pressured to be, okay, this would be kind of cool to do, studying abroad kind of cool or something like that. But I don't know. I just don't feel like it; at least I don't feel encouraged. I don't encourage myself enough or I just don't really have, I don't know, good support of what would be beneficial for me in the future. I don't know. It's kind of weird (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

What makes this feeling of alienation all the more prevalent for Cristina is she is unsure whom she can speak to about these challenges. While her family has been an enormous support and her older sister has mentored her in many

different ways, she believes she is not able to speak to them about this struggle. Cristina shares, “They actually don't know like, it's like a university culture that I don't really know who to talk to about that” (Personal communication, February 4, 2020). According to the literature, Cristina can be struggling with biculturalism. Suarez et al. (1997) define biculturalism as “developing along two independent dimensions, one of which involves a linear process of accommodation to the host culture” (p. 491). Suarez et al., (1997) discuss that students at times face conflict assimilating into both cultures and finding a balance between both. When asked what Cristina has done to attempt to overcome this challenge of alienation and isolation, she says that she has not done much other than look at her emails and plan to be more involved in the next term.

In varying ways, research participants shared their challenges and struggles. Some spoke more of family obligations and family challenges, while others shared their experiences with mental health and time management issues. These women at all levels are faced with one common challenge, and that is their commitment to their family. Family was brought up for each participant during the interviews, while family may not have been a challenge for all of them during their academic career, it was present in some form. In Espinoza's 2010 study, she concluded that Latina students with a strong familismo background not only have academic goals but also seek to continue to be a good daughter. When pursuing higher education, the pressure experienced to meet the needs of both their academic and family lives is significant.

Awareness of Graduate School

For first-generation students, especially Latinas accessing college information is critical (Ceja, 2006). According to Ceja (2006), "given their first-generation status, the information and resources necessary to make decisions about college may not always be available to them within the home environment" (p.87). While college graduates may have some experience once they earn their first degree, institutions should not assume that they have experience in all higher education processes and procedures. When a first-generation college alumnus is seeking to apply to graduate school, there is no guarantee that the vicious cycle of the college choice process does not start over, leaving them baffled once more as they were when they first applied to college. This study sought to understand: In what ways, if any, does awareness of graduate school, options, cost impact the career goals of these women? During the interview, process participants were asked the following questions to be able to obtain an answer to this question. The questions were:

- Are you considering further education beyond your undergraduate or current degree? What would make you more likely to apply?
(Non-graduate student/Non-graduate alumni only)
- If you do plan to apply to graduate school or have applied, what led you to be interested in graduate school? (Non-graduate student/Non-graduate alumni only)

These interview questions were not presented to all research participants. These questions were designed for current undergraduate students and undergraduate alumni. The questions seek to understand if these individuals plan to apply to graduate school and what leads them to either apply or not apply. The goal of asking these questions is to begin to understand better how to support Latinas in the graduate school pipeline.

Education Beyond a Bachelors

Of the four research participants that are either undergraduate alumni or current undergraduate students, two indicated that they are considering furthering their education beyond the bachelor level. Alice, who is a self-motivated alum and currently completing an internship, plans to begin the application process for graduate school this May. She shares, “I hope I get accepted into some school. I'm not sure what area of study, because for every school it's going to be kind of different for which degree I'm going to apply to. But yeah, I want to go back to school” (Personal communication, February 3, 2020). For her, it is an absolute that she will apply. Elizabeth, who is also an undergraduate alum, plans to apply to graduate school as well and is currently preparing. She shares,

Oh, absolutely. I'm currently studying for my GMAT because I'm trying to get that passed so I can apply. I'm planning to apply to the University of San Diego, University of California, USC, and San Jose State. I'm pursuing my Masters in Taxation, so I need to do the GMAT for that. I

was point and a half short from the qualification. I'm taking this year to complete my GMAT to complete my CPA, and then next year, hopefully, I'll find out what school I'm going to go (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Of the four research participants, the two current undergraduate students were the ones that are not planning to apply to graduate school. Cristina, the youngest of three siblings, originally wanted to apply to graduate school, but she does not think she will follow through. For her, she plans first to find a job. She shares,

I feel like I need to start getting my life together a little bit and finding a job and having a more stable life and being a little bit more independent. I think that's why. And I just don't feel like I have like two to three years to spend getting an education or going a little bit further than my bachelor's degree to say. I think that's why I don't think right now would be the proper time maybe in the future, but I don't think right now (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

When asked what would make her more likely to apply to graduate school, she shared,

I think one of the reasons is, for me, if I could find a job that would pay for it, to pay for that program. Or a job that would require it and if it's a job that I really enjoy doing and it requires a master's degree to get promoted or something" (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

What is standing in her way of applying is time. In the past, she believed that a graduate degree was “mandatory.” She recently found that was not the case and so instead wants to gain independence and begin her career rather than continue her education beyond a bachelor’s degree.

For Stephanie, the oldest of four siblings, she plans to obtain her teaching credential but is not sure she will go beyond for a graduate degree. She shares,

After my credentialing program; I just want to take the time to just kind of like focus on that. It's not a yes or no. Whether I don't really know if I want to go back and get like a master's degree” (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

When asked what would make her more likely to apply to graduate school, she shared,

I don't know. I think part of me like as of now; I know my grades aren't like the best, so that's why I knew that like maybe going into a master's program wouldn't be best right now. That's why I just decided to do a credentialing program. But I think maybe in the future like if there's time like if I can actually commit my time to something like that, after going my career, it could potentially happen (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

When asked if she had looked into the graduate programs at her institution for their admission requirements, she shared that she had not but was sure that her grades would not be good enough to be admitted. In returning to the literature,

Ceja (2006) found that while first-generation colleges graduates have or will obtain their first degree, it does not mean that they are aware of all higher education information such as graduate school. While institutions should not force students to apply to graduate school, agents of change should make information readily available to them.

Applying to Graduate School

Of the four in the undergraduate group, two indicated that they plan to apply, and one stated that they had planned to apply but are no longer considering this route. When asked during the interview process what led you to be interested in graduate school, they all shared different stories. Elizabeth first became interested in graduate school when she came to find her passion in taxation. She shares,

The fact that I'm very passionate about taxes. I've been doing VITA for the last... it's going to be my fifth year or sixth year, and I'm really interested in taxes. I find taxes interesting because I feel like they are like a puzzle.

There's no gray area. There's always a way to find the answers. I find that interesting. And I have heard of forensic accounting before, and that's something that also interests me. Tax law is something that I really enjoy.

And I always tell [my peers], even when I was president of Accounting Association and Beta Alpha Psi, having the passion for money is one thing, but passion for what you want to do for the rest of your life is something totally different. You won't feel stranded to be like I have to do

this every day. You have to go with the mentality that you really enjoy, you're making something positive not only for you but the impact that you have on others. And I think that's important. As our life changes nowadays, where it's so much in the go, go, go moment. We want to have that passion to be successful and happy in life. I think that's important (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

Alice first became interested in graduate school by the professionals that surrounded her during her internships. She shares,

A lot of them have their MBA, so that's something I am interested in. But just being in that environment with a bunch of professionals, most of them have higher degrees, and it shows in their work. It's beneficial not only to yourself but to help the community even more too. So, I don't know, it's just cool, just to see people, and then it's like, I know it's cool to have that by your name too. Like MBAs, I like that. So, I don't know, I just, I want to go back. I like learning too (Personal communication, February 3, 2020).

While Stephanie no longer plans to apply, she was initially interested. She shares, "I think because...getting my bachelor's degree and I thought I wanted to get as high of the education that I possibly can...I thought it was just like, yeah, mandatory" (Personal communication, February 4, 2020). While she does not believe earning a graduate degree is mandatory, she does agree that it helps in obtaining a better job. Still, she concludes her thoughts on graduate school with "I don't think that I need it" (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

It is unclear as to why of the four in the undergraduate group that only two are confident that they will apply to graduate school. What Alice and Elizabeth both share and may explain as to why they are sure of their choice to apply to graduate school is they have strong examples of individuals that have obtained a graduate degree or higher. Elizabeth is active on campus and has learned to network under the mentorship of her professors and mentors. Alice, while she does not have a mentor, has completed internships and is currently an intern where she can gain firsthand knowledge on how a graduate degree can help her in her career. Cristina does not plan to apply to graduate school, while she has a mentor, her sister. Cristina does not have an agent of change who has supported her through her educational career and has not found a familiar face with her professors. She is also a student who struggles with the feeling of alienation. Stephanie shared that she has mentors, one being her academic advisor and another that works on campus in a staff role. While she has received support in obtaining a job on campus and support in university procedures, the mentorship has not gone beyond those avenues.

Summary

This chapter presented the outcome of the survey 'Graduate School Awareness', completed by 215 students from a four-year institution in California. This institution is classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution. In the second phase of data collection, interviews were conducted with ten research participants

broken down into three groups a) Undergraduate group, b) Graduate group, and c) Graduate Alumni Group. During the interview process, first-generation Latinas had the opportunity to share their stories. The data collected and stories shared captured in Chapter Four established the foundation for the recommendations and conclusions discussed in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, an overview of the purpose of the research study highlighted. The following section presents the findings from the research study. This chapter furthermore presents recommendations for institutions and agents of change. Next, recommendations for future research are discussed. Finally, the researcher presents the limitations of the study candidly and honestly, along with a conclusion statement from the researcher.

Overview

The purpose of this research study was to examine how to best provide graduate school awareness for first-generation Latinas at a four-year Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) located in Southern California. This study was a mixed methods research study. In the first phase of data collection, a quantitative survey was created by the researcher titled Graduate School Awareness. From this survey, data was obtained from students at this particular institution. The survey sought to answer if the aforementioned population is aware of graduate school. If they are aware of where they can attend graduate school, if they are aware of the cost of graduate school, if graduate school is part of their academic goal, why or why not. The second phase of data collection was in the form of interviews. Research participants were obtained with the support of the survey, Graduate School Awareness. At the end of the survey, research participants had

the option to opt in to take part in one-on-one interviews. Once the first phase was complete, the research organized the individuals who were willing to participate in the second phase into three groups a) Undergraduate group, b) Graduate group, and c) Graduate Alumni Group. Interview participants were selected at random. Interviews took place either in person or via Zoom, a video Communications software. The purpose of the interviews was to provide Latinas with a platform to share their stories. These stories were from women who have yet to complete their undergraduate degree, women in graduate school, and women who graduated with a graduate degree.

The researcher embarked on this research study with initially one question in mind; where did all the Latinx students go after they complete their Bachelor of Arts or Science degree? This single question then leads the researcher to review the literature to find that while the Latinx population is the fastest-growing population in the United States, they are less educated (Gándara, 2015). Of the Latinx population, Latinas account for twenty percent of the nation (Gándara, 2015; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). It is estimated that by 2060 Latinas will make up twenty-three percent of the females in the nation (Gándara, 2015). In reviewing the literature, what the researcher found was Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups collectively (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, Gándara, 2015, Quate & Harper, 2015).

Returning to the literature Title V of the Higher Education Act was amended

to support Hispanic Serving Institutions (Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Title V, 2018). The literature questions if these HSIs are serving the Latinx population or merely enrolling the said population to obtain federal funding (Contreras et al., 2008). As it stands, institutions are only required to report the number of students enrolled (Contreras et al., 2008). There are no checks and balances to investigate if these institutions are supporting and serving the Latinx population (Contreras et al., 2008). Furthermore, the Latinx community growth is outpacing other racial/ethnic groups, which in turn equates to HSIs growing at a fast pace in the United States (Doran, 2015; Gándara, 2015). With the 2060 projection of the Latinx population, HSIs are estimated to continue their rapid growth in the United States. The literature discusses the challenges and lack of resources Latinas experience within the university pipeline. These barriers are in the form of but not limited to finances, domestic responsibilities, discouragement, and at times discrimination (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, Espinoza, 2010, Gándara, 2010, Gándara, 2015, Garcia, 2016, Lango, 1995, Lopez, 1995, Suarez et al., 1997, Sy & Romero, 2008). If these challenges are not enough for Latinas to overcome, they will also be faced with the challenge all women face, which is the "glass ceiling." Regardless of education and experience, an unbreachable barrier will be placed to keep "minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder" (Federal Glass Commission, 1995 pp. 4). Also present in the literature was information validating the gaps in postsecondary access, retention, and completion based on race and gender.

Furthermore, research showed that there are present challenges of students who are first-generation and second language learners. As it is, the pipeline from K-12 to college is a journey and currently can be described as a race. Latinas, who are in the same race as their peers, are not only attempting to keep up but are faced with unique hurdles in their lane.

Discussion of Findings

For the analysis of the study, data collection was completed in two phases. First, a survey was created by the researcher titled Graduate School Awareness, which was completed by 215 students from the student population. As previously discussed, the survey sought to answer if the aforementioned population has graduate school awareness as to where they can attend, the cost and if graduate school is an academic goal for them. The survey was designed so that all students could have an option to complete the survey, but if they did not meet the demographic the researcher was seeking to gain information from they would be filtered out with each question until the final participants left self-identified as;

- Latina
- Female
- Between the age group of 20-45
- Hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or be in the last year of their undergraduate program
- Hold a graduate degree or currently in a graduate program
- First-generation (Students/alumni with parents born outside of the

United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That student (descendant) is the first to be born in the United States to parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university.)

The survey was both multiple-choice questions as well as open-ended questions. For the second phase of data collection, one-on-one interviews were conducted by the researcher. Research participants for this phase were obtained with the support of the survey, Graduate School Awareness. At the end of the survey, participants had the option to opt in to be part of the interview process. Those that opted in were then organized into three groups: a) Undergraduate group, b) Graduate group, and c) Graduate Alumni Group. Interview participants were selected at random. Interviews took place either in person or via Zoom, a video Communications software.

The interview questions for the second phase of data collection were motivated by the four research questions the researcher sought to answer:

- In what ways, if any, do family and cultural experiences influence the academic pathways for first-generation Latinas?
- In what ways, if any, do in-class and out-of-class experiences influence the academic pathway to graduate school for first-generation Latinas?
- In what ways, if any, do race, class, and gender play a part in the lives of these women and their educational goals?
- In what ways, if any, does awareness of graduate school, options, cost

impact the career goals of these women?

Linking Methods with Questions and Theories

During the process of creating quantitative and qualitative questions for data collection. Most questions were designed to link with the three theoretical underpinnings and the four research questions that this research was guided by. Both Table 27 and Table 28 map the questions for each data collection phase and indicates under which theoretical underpinning, if any, it falls.

Table 29. Linking Quantitative Questions with Theoretical Underpinnings

Question	Critical Race Theory	Validation Theory	Feminist Theory	Not Applicable
Quantitative – Graduate School Awareness Survey				
How do you self-identify?				X
What is your age group?				X
What is your class standing?				X
What college is your major in?				X
Regarding your ethnicity, do you consider yourself a Latina? The term "Latina" is being used in the study to be inclusive of all ethnic backgrounds that identify with the Latino identity as a female.	X			
Are you the first in your family to attend college?	X	X	X	
Are you first-generation in the United States? In this study, first-generation is defined as a student/alumnus with parents born outside of the United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That	X	X		

student/alumni (descendent) is the first (along with any siblings) to be born in the United States to parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university.				
Do you have siblings?				X
If you do have siblings, are you responsible to care for them?	X			
What is the highest level of education of your mother?	X			
What is the highest level of education of your father?	X			
What is your current living situation?				X
Are you required to contribute financially to your family household?	X		X	
Do you have a mentor(s)?	X	X	X	
In your college experience have you had a professor that shares your ethnicity/gender?	X			
Are you aware that your university has graduate school? In this study graduate school is defined as the master level	X			
Are you aware that graduate school can cost as low as \$14,500 for the whole degree?	X			
Are you aware that you can apply to graduate school outside of your current college/major?	X			
Do you plan to apply to graduate school? As a reminder, in this study graduate school is defined as the master level	X			

Table 30. Linking Qualitative Questions with Theoretical Underpinnings

Question	Critical Race Theory	Validation Theory	Feminist Theory	Not Applicable
Qualitative – Interview Questions				
Tell me about yourself.				X
What is the last grade your mother completed? Father? Siblings?	X			
Was higher education talked about in your home growing up? If yes, how was it discussed?	X	X		
Did your parents have expectations of you with regards to higher education? If yes, what were their expectations?	X	X	X	
Why did you personally choose to attend college?	X		X	
Are you considering further education beyond your undergraduate or current degree? What would make you more likely to apply?	X	X	X	
If you do plan to apply to graduate school or have applied, what led you to be interested in graduate school?	X	X	X	
Why did you apply to graduate school?	X	X	X	
What helped you through your graduate program?		X		
Do you have, or have you had a mentor?	X	X	X	
When did you first meet your mentor?				X
How did the mentorship begin?	X	X		
If you don't have a mentor, have you attempted to obtain one? Why? Why not?	X			
When is the first time you took a course in which the professor	X			

shared the same ethnicity as you? Did this have an effect on you?				
What has been the greatest challenge for you in your academic career? What helped you overcome this challenge?	X	X	X	
Is there anything that you feel is relevant that I have not asked that you want to share?				X

Data obtained connected with the three theoretical underpinnings as well as the four research questions. Each question designed for the study stemmed from research questioned first posed and either one of the theoretical foundations and, at times, all three. The significant findings of the study were either linked to critical race theory, feminist theory, and or validation theory. Initially, during the data collection, CRT and feminist theory themes were not found. In reviewing, both the quantitative and qualitative data themes emerged, though not always overt.

Research Study Findings – Theoretical Underpinnings and Qualitative Data Collection

The analysis of data collection for the research study was then guided by three theoretical underpinnings: validation theory, critical race theory, and feminist theory.

According to Yosso (2005), critical race theory, also known as CRT, is defined as "a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourse" (p. 74). Five

tenants outline CRT: "the intercentricity of race and racism, the challenge to the dominant ideology, the commitment of social justice, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches" (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). In this research, a CRT lens was used to analyze normative practices in higher education and society that hinder the academic progress of first-generation Latinas. Additionally, it was used to examine and challenge the ways race and racism are directly and indirectly impacting first-generation Latinas concerning graduate school awareness.

The focus of the feminist theory is the breakdown of gender inequality (Acker, 1987). This theory examines women's' and men's social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, one being education (Acker, 1987). The research for first-generation Latinas pursuing a graduate degree is limited. Yet, these women are a significant part of the collective future (Quaye & Harper, 2015). In the research, a feminist theory lens was used in seeking social justice for women in education and concerning the constant barrier of the glass ceiling, as first identified by Hymowitz and Schellhardt in a Wall Street Journal in 1986 (Lockwood, 2004). The term was coined to represent the barriers women faced whose goal was senior management (Lockwood, 2004). With time, the term was not only used to refer to women but has now come to signify the barriers that all minorities face for executive leadership positions (Wilson, 2014).

Rendón (1994) presented Validation Theory for students who are low-

income and first-generation students to enroll in higher education. Focusing on how students can find success in college, and more so those that have been invalidated or have doubts about their ability to be successful in higher education (Linares & Muñoz, 2011). By using Validation Theory, students can be advocated for who are unsure of how to be successful in college and unfamiliar with college standards (Rendón, 1994). In general, students often experience a sense of doubt; this doubt can be all the more prevalent for first-generation Latinas who are not only first in their family to attend college but first in their family to be born in the United States. These women, the trailblazers for their family, need to be all the more validated to continue their education.

Findings that arose from the research are in connection with critical race theory (CRT), feminist theory, and validation theory (Rendón, 1994; Yosso, 2005; Acker, 1987). The key findings in correlation to the theoretical underpinnings for this study are discussed below.

Finding 1: Critical Race Theory

In this study, while not clear-cut, evidence of critical race theory (CRT) themes can be found during the interview process. Yosso (2005) defines CRT as “a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourse” (Yosso, 2015, p. 74). During the interview process, research participants shared the lack of familiar face at their institution. Table 26. Codes, Categories, and Themes Found from Qualitative Data found in chapter four share the frequency this theme surfaced.

The majority of research participants shared that they struggled to reflect on their educational experience if there was a professor who shared their ethnicity and or gender. Many research participants shared that the majority of their professors have been white and males. There were instances in which research participants were confident in their response to share that they had many professors who shared their ethnicity and or gender. However, they also recognized that it was due to their degree major being Spanish.

For example, Rosemary, an alum from the institution with a graduate degree, shared that she choose to apply and attend graduate school due to found familiar faces, "I was inspired by my professors. Thank goodness I majored in Spanish because then I kind of saw the role model" (Personal communication, February 6, 2020). This was not the same for Christina, a current undergraduate student at the institution majoring in management with a human resource concentration. Christina shared,

I can't remember a Hispanic professor. I think I want to say just having someone that you kind of look up to, having the same background as you really does help. I feel like it would be someone that I can possibly reach out to after class and feel a little bit more comfortable. Whereas compared to a white man, professor, I don't think I would be as comfortable if it was maybe even a Hispanic male. Yeah. So, I definitely do think it does have an effect (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

On the off chance that these women found a familiar face, it was then when they found additional motivation and encouragement. For the women in this study, many of these familiar face encounters were counted and few. Lupe, an alum from a graduate program at the institution, shared, “I kind of ended up thinking, Okay. Well, maybe I'm not expected to see many of us at the higher level in graduate school. Because I was surrounded by just mainly white, white peers, white males, white females, or European, or from Asian descent” (Personal communication, February 10, 2020). The lack of familiar face in turn then had an effect on them linked with white privilege and how even at a Hispanic Serving Institution, the majority of administration and professors are white. There is a potential power structure based on white privilege and white supremacy and, in turn, one factor potentially contributing to the marginalization of people of color.

Finding 2. Feminist Theory

Once more, in this study, while not overt feminist theory, themes can be found during the interview process. The focus of feminist theory is the breakdown of gender inequality. In the attempt to understand the nature of gender inequality, this theory examines women’s and men’s social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, one being education (Acker, 1987). During the interview process, some research participants discussed the encouragement which was received from their support system while others were

not as fortunate. For example, Rosemary, an alum from a graduate program shared her parents' expectations concerning higher education,

When I got married...because my parents were not going to let me move out without being married. We're a traditional, old-fashion family. I remember my father telling my husband, 'Put her to work.' My husband was like, 'No, she's going to go to school.' I don't think my father expected me to go to school; he didn't tell me, he told my husband (Personal communication, February 6, 2020).

Roxanne, a current graduate student at the institution, shared a similar experience. Her father did not support her mother in obtaining an education. She shares, "I saw my mom nurturing and being a mother, and, like I said, my dad kind of didn't support her in pursuing her education" (Personal communication, February 5, 2020). Other participants commented that obtaining an education was not an example made by female figures in their family, but being a mother and homemaker was. Women in the study shared that they were pursuing higher education but at the same time then putting a hold on their "womanly need" of having a family. Roxanne, shared this thought clear cut when she shared,

I kind of put my wants as a woman on hold to get my degree and be established and get in my career and then the family and all that will follow. So that was something that was really important to me because I honestly thought out of high school, I was like, oh, I'm going to have a kid soon, I'm going to be pregnant by the time I'm 20, and I'll probably work

some average job, and my boyfriend will move in with me and my parents and we'll be fine. But that's not the route I decided to take. And I'm not saying that a lot of Hispanic women are like that, but it's very common for us to like... Like a lot of my friends that are Hispanic, they have like three kids already and I'm only 28 (February 5, 2020).

Regardless of women's movements and growth in empowerment, there remains gender inequality in the Latinx culture in some cases in the form of oppression and stereotyping. These women are fighting oppression and stereotypical gender roles, not necessarily due to society but their culture.

Finding 3. Validation Theory

During the data analysis, Table 26. Codes and Categories found in chapter four share the frequency this theme surfaced. Rendón (1994) presented Validation Theory for students who are low-income and first-generation students to enroll in higher education. Themes in correlation with validation theory are but not limited to; family support, mentorship, peer support, and finding a familiar face. From the data, the researcher found that when an individual had access to an agent of change and received support (validation), they were more inclined to apply and attend graduate school. Elizabeth, an alum with a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting, shares, "I had mentors throughout my educational career and community college. Like I said, the professor that told me education is a marathon, not a sprint. And then currently here...I have a mentor professor. She has encouraged me to continuously get involved with the community" (Personal

communication, February 4, 2020). Due to the support that she obtained and is obtaining, she is studying for the GMAT to be able to complete her graduate application for several well-known institutions across the nation. She credits her accomplishments on her mentors and the support from her husband, “I resigned from my job to pursue my education full time. And thankfully to the help of my husband being able to just be on one income, I was able to do that” (Personal communication, February 4, 2020).

The goal of obtaining a higher education was all the more prevalent when individuals were able to rely on family support and peer support in their educational journey. Validation themes did not come from faculty mentorship alone; it was also the support of family. Roxanne shares,

My parents have been probably the biggest help. I still live at home, they allowed me to stay at home, and they don't really ask much of me. I mean, I help around with a couple of bills, but they want me to focus on school. It's kind of cute that like when they know that my tests are around the corner if I ask them to leave for the day because I need peace and quiet when I'm studying, they'll leave. They really respect the hard work that I've put into my studies, and my parents are probably are what have been keeping me going and a big part, they've been a big help (Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

Individuals that were enabled, bolstered, and supported by an in-and out-of-class agent of change were more likely to pursue graduate school and higher-level

goals. These individuals were, in turn, also all the more aware of the requirements and expectations of graduate school.

While the evidence for CRT and feminist theory is not clear-cut, themes were found with a connection to lack of familiar face and the effect of having students lost in a sea of white faces. In returning to the literature, to have Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) defined based strictly on enrollment is inadequate (Garcia, 2016). More has to be done to ensure that students of all backgrounds and at HSIs, students of Latinx descent feel seen and heard. Garcia's (2016) research concerning HSIs found that students at HSIs may not feel as though the campus as a whole is serving the Latinx population and suggest that HSIs should do more concerning institutions validating students' cultural ways. The findings from this research support this claim.

Feminist theory themes were not overt but were found during the interview process. In returning to the literature, there are general challenges that women face, and then there are challenges for Latinas. These women are not only struggling with gender discrimination in the workplace as all women, but Latinas are also faced with more obstacles than white women in that they are women, and they are not white. Latinas are faced with the challenges of not only obtaining an education, but they additionally must engage in developing the correct skills, behavior, and knowledge required of society in the workforce. Moreover, these women are additionally faced with biculturalism defined as "developing along two independent dimensions, one of which involves a linear

process of accommodation to the host culture. While biculturalism may help some individuals, this is not always the case" (Suarez et al., 1997, p. 491). In culture, there are cultural effects, and shared behaviors and customs learned from the institutions and people around us. The women in this study are faced with numerous challenges, unlike any other culture. During the interviews, some participants discussed the encouragement which was received from their support systems while others were not as fortunate. As previously mentioned, Rosemary shared a lack of support from her father. Lupe, a graduate alum, shared that she struggled with the house rules

Living in my home was a very heavy Salvadorian type of lifestyle. So, there's a lot of machismo, a lot of, it wasn't my dad, it was my stepdad when he just made it seem like it was just his way or no way. So that was another reason why I needed to get out and figure out, there has to be something different than this (Personal communication, February 10, 2020).

Other participants commented that obtaining an education was not an example made by female figures in their family, but being a mother and homemaker was. Roxanne, a current graduate student, shared,

I saw my mom nurturing and being a mother, and, like I said, my dad kind of didn't support her in pursuing her education. And then myself, if I wasn't with the engineering boyfriend, I probably would have found someone because I yearned my whole life, for a family, for a marriage, and I'm still

battling that right now. But with the engineering boyfriend, he got it through my head that like you need to have this before you can have this if you want to have this kind of lifestyle. I kind of put my wants as a woman on hold to get my degree and be established and get in my career and then the family and all that will follow (Personal communication, February 5, 2020).

Women in the study shared that they were pursuing higher education but, at the same time, putting a hold on their "womanly needs" of having a family.

Regardless of women's movements and growth in empowerment, there remains gender inequality in the Latinx culture, in some cases, in the form of oppression and stereotyping. These women are fighting oppression and stereotypical gender roles, not necessarily due to society but their culture.

Validation theory themes were vast. Themes in correlation with validation theory are but not limited to; family support, mentorship, peer support, and finding a familiar face. In returning to the literature Lyon, Scroggins, & Rule (1990) found that "mentoring can play an important part in the growth of a... student. The belief that a particular member/agent of change is taking an interest in a student's progress leads that student to feel better about [their] academic experience" (Lyon et al., 1990, p.284). Students who experience a close academic relationship with a faculty member had a richer academic education than those who did not (Lyon et al., 1990). The presence of mentors is crucial for all students, and all the more critical for Latinas as many of them are trailblazers

in academia (Gándara, 2015), the first in their family to attend college. For those individuals that had a close working relationship with a faculty member or agent of change, had a fuller education than their counterparts who did not (Lyon et al., 1990). Marisca, a current graduate student, shared that she did not have a mentor, "I wish I did" (Personal communication, February 12, 2020). She attempted to obtain a mentor many times during her academic experience. Still, she was not successful, she shares her experience "I tried to look for mentors through these programs that they have here, like the student mentors. But just like everyone else, students, we're all busy. There's a certain timeframe we can meet with mentors. It's better just to talk to friends instead. At least they'll be there for you in their own free time. But I wish I had a mentor" (Personal communication, February 12, 2020). Lupe, a graduate program alum, shared that she did have mentors who helped her through her academic career. She shares her experience,

I had really good mentors that served more as like that parental guide when it came to college. The most impactful mentor that I had, her ethnicity, well she's African American female. She was my chair of my thesis. And then the other two committee members, one was Vietnamese, and then the other is a white male" (Personal communication, February 10, 2020).

What was found was, when an individual has access to an agent of change and received support, they were more inclined to apply and attend graduate school.

The goal of obtaining a higher education was all the more prevalent when individuals were able to rely on family and peer support in their educational journey. Individuals that were enabled and supported by an in-and out-of-class agent of change were more likely to pursue graduate school.

Research Study Findings – Quantitative Data Collection

In reviewing the data collections from the survey, what was found by most of the survey participants was that they are aware of graduate school but not aware of the cost of graduate school. In returning to the literature, Ramirez (2011) found that Latinx students encounter many barriers and sources of support as they steered themselves through the graduate school application process. Contreras & Contreras (2015), in turn, found that access is not necessarily the issue concerning the Latinx population as there are many open institutions throughout the United States which they can attend. While it is true that this population has access to many institutions, the issue at heart is they may not know how to apply and be accepted to such institutions.

An additional finding that arose from the survey was that the majority of survey participants did not have a mentor. Research shows that mentorship is vital for students, especially marginalized students. Taking into consideration the impact of mentors for the interview participants, the idea that a mentor is critical in a student's academic career holds truth. In returning to the literature, for first-generation students, especially Latinas accessing college information is vital (Ceja, 2006). According to Ceja (2006), "given their first-generation status, the

information and resources necessary to make decisions about college may not always be available to them within the home environment" (p.87). Ceja (2006) found the importance of "protective agent" when seeking information on higher education. It is demonstrated how those closest to us are not able to serve as mentors but also just how important and helpful it is to have a mentor when going through the college application process.

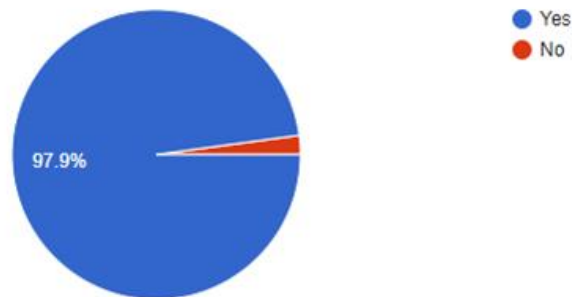
Finding 4. Quantitative Data Collection Findings – They Are Aware

The survey, Graduate School Awareness, revealed that the majority of survey participants were aware of graduate school but not aware of the cost of graduate school. Having an awareness of graduate school, in turn, does not equate to interest in applying to graduate school. While less than 4% stated they did not plan to apply to graduate school, 23.4% shared they were unsure if they would be applying to graduate school. Due to the limitations of the study, the findings are limited. An important take away from this finding is that first-generation are aware of graduate school.

Table 31. Response to Survey Question: Are You Aware that Your University has Graduate School?

Are you aware that your university has graduate school? In this study graduate school is defined as the master level

47 responses



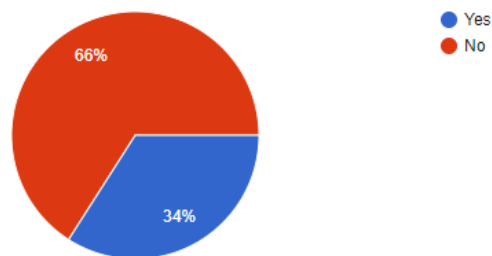
Finding 5. Quantitative Data Collection Findings – Mentorship

One important finding that arose from the survey, Graduate School Awareness, was that 66% of survey participants did not have a mentor. Research has shown the importance of mentorship has over a student, especially a marginalized student (Gándara, 2015; Ceja, 2006; Fry, 2002; Perna, 2000; Lyon et al., 1990). Taking into consideration the impact made by mentors and agents of change for the interview participants, the idea that a mentor is vital in a student's academic career holds truth. Mentors do not necessarily have to be faculty. However, mentorship is prudent, and in cases where mentorship is not available, the study shows that the students are craving and longing for a mentor to guide them through the university pipeline better.

Table 32. Response to Survey Question: Do You Have a Mentor?

Do you have a mentor?

47 responses



In the study, the outcome is that first-generation Latinas are aware of graduate school. From the survey, Graduate School Awareness, 97.9% of individuals stated that they are aware of graduate school. They first become knowledgeable in various ways. One survey participant shared that she "first became aware of graduate school through the professor and that I shared ethnicity and gender with. We had conversations about life and how I wanted to become someone in life to make my parents proud. She mentioned graduate school, and I became very interested" (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020). Another individual shared that she first became aware of graduate school "through peers and emails sent from my undergraduate institution. My advisor also gave me information, but it was aimed at law school since that was my original plan when I first began looking into continuing my education" (Graduate School Awareness Survey, 2020). While these students are aware, the majority

are not receiving support in the form of mentorship during their academic careers. Research shows the importance of mentorship (Gándara, 2015; Ceja, 2006; Fry, 2002; Perna, 2000; Lyon et al., 1990), and it can be found during the interview conversations of the second phase of data collection. These women, while they are aware and while they are finding themselves in graduate school, are going about the process alone. Being aware and applying to graduate school is not enough; these women, these trailblazers need to be better supported by educational leaders and agents of change. It is not enough that they are attending a Hispanic Serving Institutions and checking off a box for funding, educational leaders should do more and want more for this population that they are benefiting from (Contreras et al., 2008).

The researcher first began to ask the question of where all the Latinas in graduate school were when she was five years into working in graduate programs. Initially, the idea was that first-generation Latinas were not aware of graduate school and thus not applying. Studies supported this notion (Gándara, 2010, 2015), while others did not support it (Ramirez, 2011). The researcher will go further into detail on how separation is made between the research and the researcher in chapter six and how objectivity persisted during the research study.

In reflecting on the findings, what was affirmed was the lack of familiar faces and lack of mentorship in correlation to critical race theory and validation theory. Research participants shared the notion of lack of familiar faces at their institution. Most research participants shared that they struggled to reflect on

their educational experience if there was a professor who shared their ethnicity and/or gender. Many research participants shared that most of their professors have been white and males. Concerning validation theory, what was found was, when an individual had access to an agent of change and received support, they were all the more inclined to apply and attend graduate school.

An additional finding which was affirmed by the study was the culture demands that these women face in correlation with feminist theory. During the interviews, some participants discussed the encouragement which was received from their support system while others were not as fortunate. According to the research, there are various possible reasons as to why Latinas obtain the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Hispanic racial groups. One of the reasons is tied to their culture. Latinas have family obligations that are not standard for others from different backgrounds such as but not limited to: serving as the translator for their parents, helping with the home, taking care of siblings, and making financial contributions to the family income. These obligations go hand in hand with familismo, which is a cultural value emphasizing family closeness and loyalty. Familismo requires an individual family member to put the needs of the family first, even if it means making personal sacrifices, which has been identified as a value characteristic of many Latinx populations.

In reflecting on the findings, what was not affirmed was the idea that Latinas are not applying and attending graduate school because they are not

aware of graduate school (Gándara, 2010, 2015). Based on the quantitative data collection from the survey, what was found was that first-generation Latinas are aware of graduate school. According to Ramirez (2011), the Latinx population is not faced with an issue of accessing graduate school as there are many open institutions throughout the United States which this population can attend. The problem is not awareness, and the problem is not access, the issue is the application process causing a barrier to apply and attend. Obstacles that were found during the qualitative data collection process correlate with the literature. Barriers which Latinas face, such as lack of knowledge, lack of guidance and support, institutional abuse, and standardized testing such as the GRE and GMAT.

In concluding the findings section, the researcher found the presence of intersectionality with interview participants. Intersectionality is intended to bring forth dynamics that have been overlooked by the feminist movements in that discrimination is not only based on gender or race but can overlap and cause a simultaneous impact on individuals. According to Crenshaw (2016), marginalized individuals are faced with intersectionality all over the world. The glass ceiling effect is a term coined to represent the barriers women face if their goal is to move up the corporate ladder. This glass ceiling denies opportunities for women and minorities in their careers. Yet, with the population, this study is focused on, Latinas are faced with disadvantages that overlap and are compounded. While a white woman makes seventy-seven cents for every dollar a white man makes,

Latinas make fifty-six cents. Intersectionality goes beyond the pay gap; it is also about who is getting hired, heard, promoted, and supported...everything adds up to significant inequities.

Intersectionality impacts the disadvantages Latinas face. They are female, and because they are from the Latinx culture, they are fighting twice the battle. These individuals are faced with specific hindrances because they are females who identify as Latinx. Because of this, Latinas are faced with disadvantages which neither Latinos nor white women have to deal with. According to the research, some but not all Latinas are at a crossroads facing gender and cultural norms that they have grown up with. Concerning the female role, Latinas are faced with the challenge that their gender is a form of oppression. Historically the primary purpose of females in the Latinx culture has been to be the caregiver and the mother. Due to this historical role, many times, women have defined themselves through their family and children rather than independently. Concerning individuals being part of the Latinx culture, these individuals are faced with the challenges of marginalization. The Latinx culture is pushed to the side and seen as less important. This social phenomenon in that the minority, in this case, the Latinx culture, is excluded, and their aspirations ignored. Though the Latinx population is the largest minority group and the fastest-growing community, they are the second most discriminated group after African Americans. Because of this, women who identify as Latinx will be faced with intersectionality through both their academic and professional careers.

Recommendations for Institutions and Agents of Change

As noted by Elizabeth, "Our participation out there, it's not predominant as other races, and it's kind of sad...not sad, but like why is that? (Personal communication, February 4, 2020). Truly, as discussed in the literature review for this study, Latinas as a whole, have not achieved what other non-Latinx racial groups have collectively. Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of other non-Latinx racial groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018; Gándara, 2015; Quate & Harper, 2015). The data collection reveals that mentorship and finding a familiar face in the university pipeline impacts first-generation Latinas to continue with their education. Educational leaders at Hispanic Serving Institutions need to consider how they can more effectively and equitably support Latinx students. Below are recommendations for institutions and agents of change on how to best support first-generation Latinas to begin closing the graduate school enrollment gap.

Mentorship

Mentors can help support first-generation Latinas just as mentors can help support all individuals. When one has a mentor, they fight for the protégé when called for and use their experience to help the protégé. For trailblazing Latinas, this is something that can come in handy in a situation that can either make them or break them. For example, these mentors could help the mentee bypass the organizational hierarchy and provide reflective power. "Mentors act to bolster their protégé's confidence in themselves through encouragement and praise"

(Lyons, 1990). The role of a mentor will be an important role as they will serve as a role model, information provider, and possible door opener (Lyons, 1990).

According to William Lyons, "having a mentor is absolutely essential for success in graduate school. Graduate school mentors and their protégés share a comradeship of such extraordinary intensity that it transcends the normal teacher/student relationship" (p 279).

The institution has mentorship programs. Based on the data collection, these students are either not aware of the programs or have attempted to access the program with failure. The issue is that these students who are having trouble navigating the university system and culture may not know how to access these programs. Another issue is the mentor programs are not geared for all students. For example, the Student Mentoring Program targets first and second-year undergraduate students (Student Mentoring Program, 2020). This program is in the format of peer-to-peer. One research participant shared that she attempted to seek mentorship through this program but was not connected with a mentor due to conflicting schedules.

Another mentoring program at the institution is the Alumni Mentor Program. This program uses an online platform to build connections and obtaining mentorship. In reviewing the website for the program, it is not clear if the program is for alumni to mentor alumni or if current students can access the platform and begin connecting with alumni from the institution. It is recommended that the department responsible for this program make clear who the program is

for, and if current students can access the platform to promote the program better. One research participant shared that she has trouble finding a mentor because of her current home location. She understands that it is difficult for working professionals to make time to meet and so has chosen to wait on obtaining a mentor until she can relocate. An online program such as the Alumni Mentor Program would help support students that do not live close to campus or in remote areas.

These programs may not be enough, and new programs within each college may be created so that students can have the opportunity to network with faculty, alumni, and agents of change. This will give current students an opportunity to not only work on a soft skill such as networking but the opportunity to obtain a mentor. Additionally, first-generation students may need support to understand the importance of a mentor and how to obtain one. A workshop may be needed on how students and alum can begin a mentorship relationship.

Furthermore, it is recommended that agents of change review the mentorship programs and design them in a way so that students can access them with ease. It is not enough that these programs are created, these programs need to be reviewed, and marketed better so that all students can have an opportunity to have a mentor at least once during their academic career.

Guest Speakers

Second, guest speakers can help this population not only obtain information from alumni but connect with a familiar face and see that someone

like them can obtain a graduate and even a doctoral degree. At the same time, these guest speakers might be able to serve as mentors if time permits. The institution invests in guest speakers from across the nation. What better way for students to see what they can accomplish than for the institution to bring back their alumni to speak to their current students.

Mini Information Sessions

At this institution, programs hold information sessions for their graduate program or college programs. It is recommended that the Office of Graduate Studies hold mini information sessions to provide general information for programs offered by the institution. The information can be delivered twofold, a) having a representative attend capstone courses each term, and b) creating an email video session.

To deliver mini information sessions during capstone courses, a representative from the Office of Graduate Studies can give a quick five-minute presentation that highlights necessary graduate school information. Information that can be included is; making it clear that the institution offers graduate school, the application process, average cost, financial aid options, scholarship options, graduate assistantship opportunities, important deadlines, and where information can be found. This mini information session format would be a sure way to provide information to a larger population of the institution. This same five-minute presentation can then be recorded and once a term emailed to the student

population with an attachment of the various graduate programs which are available at the institution.

While various programs and colleges hold information sessions at the institution, if the students and alumni are not attending these sessions, then educational leaders and agents of change should begin the process of going to the students rather than waiting for the students to come to them. To be able to reach alum, the video information session can be emailed via alum listservs to ensure even alumni are receiving this vital information.

Reflect the Student Demographics with Their Hires

Hispanic Serving Institutions educational leaders should review the administration, faculty, and staff demographics to ensure that they are as diverse as their students are. Familiar faces help students feel comfortable and encouraged to accomplish their educational goals (Dayton, 2004). Faculty, staff, and administration from a minority group will be able to understand and better support Latinx students and the obstacles they are faced with, such as family and financial obligations as well as their cultural obligations (Sy & Romeo 2008).

Many times, Latinx students are the first in their family to attend college, and so are faced with struggles in navigating the higher education system (Lopez, 1995). Hispanic-Serving Institutions are forecasted to continue to increase in the coming years. While Title V funding has provided support for underfunded institutions, it is not enough that these institutions are receiving funding for enrolling a certain number of students. While these institutions

continue to enroll Latinx students and serve the surrounding communities, more support is needed to help these students achieve their educational goals.

Educational leaders should take note of who is being hired. They should then ask, does the faculty, administration, and staff reflect the student demographics? If we want students from all ethnicities and backgrounds to succeed, then hiring practices should begin to change and reflect their students rather than allowing their marginalized students to be lost in a sea of white faces.

Recommendations for Future Research

In conducting the interviews and then reviewing the data, the researcher has four recommendations for future research. The goal is to understand better the enrollment gap at the postsecondary level and how stakeholders at various institutions can best support the growing population, Latinx.

The first recommendation stems from the survey results in that first-generation Latinas are aware of graduate school, and they are applying. The recommendation could be a data analysis seeking to answer the question; wherein graduate school are Latinas? The data which can be reviewed is application data with the support of Graduate Studies. Per the literature, women are more inclined to earn degrees in communication, education, English literature, and health profession while men are pursuing degrees in business and engineering (Lynch & Post, 1996). Is this true? Are Latinas in graduate school but in the colleges for Education, Social and Behavior Sciences? Are they only missing, or is there a lack of Latinas in Business and Public Administration?

The second recommendation stems from the survey, Graduate School Awareness, and one-on-one interviews. The study would be a content analysis for marketing graduate programs and techniques for each program/college at a Hispanic Serving Institution. The purpose of the content analysis would be to answer the following questions that arise from this study; A) Does the program marketing material have too much information, causing prospects to feel overwhelmed in reviewing the information? B) Does the program marketing material lack information, causing prospects not fully to understand the requirements for admissions? C) Is the information for graduate programs challenging to find without guidance? And lastly, D) What does each program do to market their graduate program?

The third recommendation from the one-on-one interviews concerning birth order. The study will seek to answer the question if birth order affects academic success for Latinas in correlation with their cultural expectations. From this study, the researcher came to note; interview participants were either the oldest in their family or the youngest. In the rare case, one was the middle child.

The final recommendation derives from the literature. While Latinas are pursuing higher education at a faster rate than their brothers, the question remains as to why? A similar study could be conducted at the same institution to understand better why there is a gap or if there is still a gap between the Latinx population and graduate school but with the males.

Limitations of the Study

This mixed-methods validation study This mixed-methods validation study sought to understand how best to provide graduate school awareness to the first-generation Latina population and obtain best practices to market graduate school to Latinas. One limitation is that only a sample of the potential population responded, and of that sample, a smaller subsample was interviewed at length. It can be difficult to generalize from samples to the full population accurately. Another limitation of this study is that it was conducted at one Hispanic Serving Institution in one region of one state. Hispanic Serving Institutions are spread over 13 states in the United States, with more than half in California, Texas, and New Mexico (Contreras et al., 2008, p. 73). While these findings shed some light to the purpose and topic of the study, much more is needed to fully understand the gap in enrollment that is reflected in Census data.

Conclusion

Chapter five discussed the findings of the study in correlation to the three theoretical underpinnings: critical race theory, feminist theory, and validation theory. The findings from the study then connected back with the literature review. Based on the findings, recommendations were made as to how institutions and educational leaders can begin to close the enrollment gap for first-generation Latinas. The researcher shared the limitations to the study along with areas for future research to continue to inform institutions and add to the research concerning the enrollment gap for the Latinx community. In the

following chapter, the researcher shares her story concerning the higher education pipeline.

CHAPTER SIX:
SELF-ETHNOGRAPHY

Introduction

I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English in 2007. That is what was expected of me. Like a good Mexican daughter, I did what I was told. The truth is, I never thought about graduate school, and graduate school was not a goal of mine. The honest truth, graduate school, was not something I thought was possible for someone like me, and I had no idea where I could attend graduate school. No one in my family, immediate or extended, hold a graduate degree, and only two other family members hold a bachelor's degree (both came after me). It was not until I started working in academic affairs in higher education that I learned about graduate school and felt that a graduate degree was possible for someone like myself. Fast forward to 2015, I graduated with a master's in public administration, and in 2017, I was accepted into a doctoral program. Today, I am proud to say that I am the first in my family to hold a graduate degree and first in my family to be accepted into a doctoral program.

I have worked in higher education since 2002 as either a student assistant or in a staff position. My most influential position in higher education was when my primary role was to advise graduate students through the admissions, curriculum, and graduation process. During this time, I came to notice the number of applicants from the Latinx community was a lot smaller than those of other groups. Additionally, I found that when I would speak to Latinas regarding

graduate school, self-efficacy stood in the way of their academic growth. As a Latina, I was aware of the fears they expressed as I once felt the same concerns and worries. As a first-generation Latina, wife, mother, and daughter, I was faced with some of the same challenges of which many past students I spoke with faced. During this study, I have had the opportunity to reflect on who I am as a person and how far I have come in my academic career. I have also had the chance to self-reflect how privileged I am, a term I never thought I would use. Through my educational journey, I have grown and, like a phoenix, have risen from the ashes of my past.

Who is Deborah D. Grijalva?

Recent studies have found that Latinas have obtained the lowest percentage of graduate degrees compared to all women of non-Latinx racial groups (Gándara, 2015). By the year 2060, Latinas will make up a third of the United States population. I am one of those Latinas. As the only daughter and middle child of Mexican immigrants, I have had to learn to stand on my own and be resilient. Being a first-generation Latina has the most substantial effect on how I see myself. Sandra Cisneros, one said, "I am a woman, and I am a Latina. Those are the things that make my writing distinctive; those are the things that give my writing power." In my life, what has given me power is my education. In my experience, I have met people that have known me for a little over a year. When they realize my level of education, they are surprised and taken back. It comes to a surprise to them that I hold two degrees and am now pursuing a

doctorate in education leadership. Their surprise makes me proud as I am the only one in my family and extended family to hold a graduate degree. I am especially proud because of various struggles I have overcome and am currently overcoming, but I use them as fuel to push myself as I am paving the way for others to do the same. Being an example to my daughter, youngest brother, and others make me especially proud to be a first-generation Latina college graduate because I have already made a change in one life and it will not be the last.

First-generation Latina, Born to Immigrant Parents

Growing up, I always felt different, which caused me to step away from my ethnicity. While I was able to speak fluent Spanish, no one at the schools, I attended looked like or shared my culture. The teachers, nurses, administrators, the people around me as I grew up did not look like me, and the only familiar face I was able to connect with was my mother, who was only allowed a grade school education. I felt alone in the education system, and I thought I was the only one that saw how isolated I was. I felt like an outsider, and as much as I struggled in school, my parents did not permit me to make any excuses. They expected me to be successful and to do well in school regardless of how much I was struggling. The ongoing message I would hear at home was that obtaining an education was the only way I would be successful. I pushed, and I struggled, but with grit, I was able to make my parents proud after two degrees and in my own right, made my people proud.

After thirty-five years, I can say that I am becoming all the more culturally aware, I use to be embarrassed that it had taken me this long. While I was always aware, I was different in the sea of white faces, it was not until college that the many layers of my diversity unfolded in an inharmonious manner. Even in college, I did not find many other students who shared or understood my cultural background. Classmates did not understand my challenge of being a good Mexican daughter, and going to college, while expected was also something that no one in my family understood. I was expected home immediately after class and after my work-study. After some time, I began to feel inferior about my life and background. I would avoid conversations about my home life because I would secretly wish for another, one with parents with professional careers who understood the college experience. With time and education, I began to change my outlook. I began to understand and embrace that although I was different from those around me, it did not need to mean it was negative. Due to my experiences, I was able to bring a fresh voice to the classroom setting. As soon as I fostered my perspective and found my voice, I stood out in ways others could not. At the same time, I was then able to connect with those around me. While in the past, I would not speak of my culture, my ethnicity, I now wear it as a badge of honor as I am changing my stars. With every degree walking through another door, I never had thought existed, and yet as I walk through that door, I hold it open for those that will come after me.

My Parents' Only Daughter but also the Middle Child

I am one of four and the only daughter to my Mexican parents. As the children of immigrant parents, we were expected to obtain a higher education, as the only daughter that expectation was no different regardless of other obligations. Not only was I expected to excel in school, but I was also expected to help my mother with housework and, while in college, help raise my youngest sibling and niece. Due to my gender, I have always felt oppressed as I was always expected to do more, achieve more, and at the same time, ask for less. I grew up with two brothers, one, two and a half years older than me, and one two years younger than me. My younger brother was born with a condition called Hydrocephalus. This condition causes excessive fluid in and around the brain. Hydrocephalus "occurs from a lack of absorption, blockage of flow, or overproduction of the cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) that's made inside the ventricles...too much CSF may result in a buildup of fluid that can cause the pressure inside of the head to increase" (Children's, C, 2020). Due to his condition, he had to have several surgeries as a newborn and child. My younger brother aside from the constant operations, lived and lives a healthy life but he required a lot of attention.

My older brother is the firstborn and received the remainder of attention. As the middle child, I felt as though I was not seen. When I was, it was to be assigned with a task or reprimanded due to my poor grades. I found solace reading, though I would struggle with reading I would always have a book in

hand. This solace then inspired me to begin writing poetry and stories, which my parents would tell me was a waste of time. I should focus on my studies and not on silly dreams of becoming a writer. Craving for my parents' approval and attention, I worked hard to make my parents proud and would listen in on what my parents expected of my older brother. If he failed to accomplish something, I had two years to achieve that expectation. My youngest and third brother was born when I was nineteen, and so rather than growing up with him, I helped raised him. As a sixteen-year-old I see that he is following in my path of obtaining a higher education. He has a brilliant mind. I know he will succeed and surpass me in my accomplishments.

As the only daughter, I was sheltered from the world, which in turn caused me to become introverted and scared to find my place in the world. My parents only wanted to protect me in the only way they knew how. When the time came to apply to universities, I was not permitted to apply to any universities that would require me to move away from home. I had two choices. If I wanted to ever leave home, it was going to only occur when and if I married. Like a good Mexican daughter, I listened to my parents. Though they thought they did what was best in sheltering me it only caused pain later in my life and confusion.

My Undergraduate Degree Experience

I was expected to do more than what my older brother did not achieve academically; it fell on my shoulders to accomplish. When graduating from high school with honors, I was not congratulated but instead asked why I did not

graduate with high honors. When I graduated from college with my Bachelor of Art in English, I was asked why I did not graduate with honors, again I was not congratulated. More and more was expected of me and the challenges were not addressed. For example, school did not come easy for me from day one. I struggled with reading, writing, and math, which meant I struggled in all other subjects. I have memories in grade school crying because I did not understand math but was expected to master it without the help that I needed most. I would be placed in remedial classes, and while my older brother was visiting universities, I was not privileged with the same attention. The family friends that would take my brother to visit universities did not provide me with the same opportunity. They had a daughter a year younger than me and would boast how she was in higher-level classes than I was and had a better grade point average (GPA). It was then that I realized that I should always strive to do more and be better but never better than my peers, if I was better than I would be shunned, and I needed to know my place in the world.

I am a first-generation Latina.

I was told to get an education beyond a diploma.

I aimed for that 4.0 GPA.

I was told to get an education but

shouldn't surpass my non-Hispanic friends.

But... as long as I studied, as hard as I strived...

School didn't come easy for me,

not because I'm dumb,
not because math was hard,
But because I'm dyslexic and have ADD.

(Grijalva, 2019)

Reason to Attend College

I applied and attended college because it was expected of me, my parents expected this of all their children. If for whatever reason, I would have not attended, I would have caused my family shame, and that simply was not an option. I found my way into college on my own with little to no help. This meant that my first quarter at a four-year university was met with failure. When I received my grades for that first quarter, I was faced with a 1.35 Grade Point Average (GPA). I thought at that moment that maybe university was not for me, but I reminded myself that I had no other option. I was required to attend college and graduate. With each quarter, my GPA would rise slowly but surely, but it was not without tears and fight. During this time, I never shared my grades with my parents, as long as I was attending college, and as long as I would graduate, they would be proud.

I attended college because it was expected of me, and I wanted to make my parents proud. There was no other option for me. After a few years in college, I had a change of heart. I then choose to continue college for myself so that I could find my place in the world. My goal was to graduate with an English degree and then obtain my teaching credential to teach at the high school level, a

profession that was approved by my parents. This changed in due time when I realized that I could have a profession in higher education.

Family Obligations

I not only faced academic challenges but challenges at home. During my junior year of high school, my older brother had his firstborn. When I began college, I was expected to adjust my class schedule and work-study schedule around the timing of childcare for my niece. When my baby brother was born in 2003, I was expected to help all the more with childcare. I was expected to rearrange my schedule to accommodate what was needed at home. This was not a request that I could opt out of, my parents expected me to help so that my older brother and sister in law could work to support their growing family. With regards to my baby brother, I was required to help once my mother went back to work. Again, this was not something I could opt out of and as the good Mexican daughter I did as I was told. During this time of helping with babies and toddlers, I felt as though I had to adjust my life, my schedule, my stars for children that were not my own. Growing up, I was told to never end up with my “domingo siete,” meaning, I was told to never end up with an unplanned pregnancy. Yet, while I followed through with my parents' wishes of not falling pregnant, I ended up with the responsibilities of helping raise children.

The challenge of having these types of family obligations was not easy to explain. It was difficult for me to have to tell my employer that I could only work a particular schedule because I had family responsibilities at home. It was all the

more challenging to explain to classmates I could not meet at certain times for group projects because I had to hurry home to tend to family obligations. It was all the trickier to explain to them that no, the children were not mine, but it was my responsibility to help because I was part of the family. The cultural value that I felt obligated to and did not understand then was familismo. According to Sy & Romero (2008), in the Latinx community, there is a cultural value that emphasizes the presence of intense family loyalty, closeness, and underwriting to the wellbeing of the family. Familismo requires all members of the family to put family first and make personal sacrifices where needed. With my family obligations came a conflict between what was expected of me at home and what was expected of me at school. This then led to loneliness.

Loneliness

In 2002 I began my academic career; I was the first in my family to attend college, but I did not understand what that meant. What I did understand was how alone I felt in the process. No one in my family understood the pressure I felt of attending class and then spending hours on assignments and studying at home. They were not able to understand why college was so much different from high school and how my schedule could change one quarter to the next. The memory I have of my undergraduate career was when I needed a course to graduate, and the course was only offered in the evenings. Every quarter my parents did not support enrolling in the class, and so I would put it off to the next quarter until that was no longer an option. If I wanted to graduate promptly, I

would have to enroll in the course. Regardless of how many times I explained to my parents that I had to take this course, and it was only offered at a specific time, they were not supportive. It was difficult for them to believe that classes were held that late and that I had no other option. The only way they became supportive was when I showed my older brother previous course schedules and the list of classes that I needed to graduate. Once I obtained his buy-in, then he was able to explain to my parents that there indeed was no other option for me. In the end, I was permitted to enroll in the course. The stipulation was my sister-in-law, who was also attending university, had to enroll in the class with me.

During this time, I felt so alone in this process. I only wanted to enroll in a course that was needed for my major, but my parents did not understand, and when I would vent to my college friends, they did not understand why I needed my parents' approval so much. They would tell me that if it were them, they would just take the course and not ask or tell their parents about their class schedule. I was trapped in a world where my college friends did not understand why I needed to communicate everything to my parents and a world where my parents did not understand the inner workings of college. This loneliness, in turn, made me stop talking to my college friends about the stress at home, which in turn caused me to lose contact with them. This loneliness made me then give up on taking the courses I wanted to take and enrolled in those that were during the times that I was permitted to enroll in course work. This loneliness only grew as I

began to shut myself out and solely focus on graduating so that I could move on and no longer have to ask for permission.

What I was faced with was a battle between two worlds. Suarez et al. (1997) describe the struggle I was faced with as biculturalism. During my undergraduate experience, I was in the presence of two different cultures, the one that I had grown up at home and the one I found in college, which I desperately wanted to be a part of and accepted into. Considering my Mexican culture, it was a struggle to adapt to college culture when I was expected to still abide by rules at home. As a young adult coming into my own person, I felt confused and lost, I wasn't sure where I belonged. Not understanding my personal struggle, the only solution I could find at the time was, as previously mentioned, was to shut myself out and mentally run away from both cultures.

Lack of Familiar Faces

As a first-generation college student, I was first in my family to attend college. No one before me had applied or attended university. When attending university, I was lost in a sea of white faces once more. While attending classes, I did not find anyone that looked like me or shared the same culture. As previously mentioned, before becoming more culturally aware, I use to be embarrassed by my culture. In college, I continued to feel different and out of place, and in college, it was when the many layers of my diversity unfolded in an inharmonious manner. Even in college, I did not find many other students who shared or understood my cultural background. Classmates did not understand

my challenge of being a good Mexican daughter and that while attending college was expected of me, no one in my family understands what it meant to attend college.

I continued to feel like an outsider when I came to realize that not one of my professors looked like me. The majority were white males and very few times when it was not a white male the professor was then a white female, on the rare occasion there was a Black female professor but never a Latino/a professor. The lack of diversity, in turn, made me feel as though I could not go to my professors for guidance or to let them know that I was struggling. I felt as though I did not belong at university, dropping out was not an option, and so I desperately wanted to complete my degree, graduate, and never return to the white sea. There were a few times I would find a familiar face, and it was with the staff of the university. There I found a few Latina women who understood my struggles and my culture, they would encourage me and tell me that I had to keep studying and not give up. They understood college to a certain point, and on a rare occasion, I would find a Latina college graduate who motivated me all the more to push through regardless of my insecurities.

What is a Mentor?

During my undergraduate college experience, I did not have an official mentor. In fact, I can say with absolute confidence that I did not understand what a mentor was and how much one could help with my college experience. There was one individual that came close to being a mentor. While working on campus,

a fellow student assistant who was three years ahead of me shared the same major as myself. She shared her experience with me. She advised me when to take certain classes. The trick to combining general education classes with major courses. This was important so that I would not overwhelm myself with too many English classes in one quarter. Before my first quarter began, she walked me around campus to show me where my classes were and where I could find the best study spots.

Aside from this experience that lasted a year, I had no one else in my undergraduate college career, mentoring me or guiding me. I took it upon myself to learn the inner workings of the university and studied the policies and procedures to ensure that I would meet all requirements and not miss any deadlines causing me to delay my graduation. If I had known what a mentor was and the importance of one, I would not have known where or how to meet with one. No one around me had a mentor, and no one around me was mentoring.

Lyon et al. (1990) discuss the importance of mentorship for students. When an agent of change takes an interest in a student's progress, it helps that student feel better about their college and academic experience. According to Lyon et al. (1990), students who had a mentorship with a faculty member, in turn, had a richer academic education than those who did not. In my experience, I was not equipped with the knowledge that I should obtain a mentor to help my academic and college experience. As a first-generation college student that

mentorship would have been beneficial. This is a difficult lesson I had to learn on my own. This lesson is the reason why I am now passionate about mentorship.

Academic Aspirations, isn't a Bachelor of Arts Enough?

Once I graduated with my Bachelor of Arts in English, I had no more academic aspirations. My goal was to apply to various city and university positions to begin working full-time. While I began my college career intending to obtain my teaching credential so that I could teach English at the high school level, that was no longer a goal of mine. After five years at university working to obtain my Bachelor of Arts degree, I no longer felt the need or want to continue my education, and I no longer wanted to be a student. When I graduated, I was grateful. Yet, I felt that I did not come out any more intelligent but rather with a feeling of not being smart enough to hold a degree. Soon, I would be told that I was not deserving and would need to forfeit my one accomplishment. After a year of applying for various entry-level positions at the university I graduated from and different city jobs, I was hired on at my alma mater. I was proud, and I felt accomplished because I felt I was finally able to have my degree work for me and help me finally be successful. I had no other educational aspirations, I felt that I had accomplished already so much since I was now going to hold a state job, similar to the Latinas that I found to be familiar while I was a student.

My Career Experience in Higher Education

My career in higher education began the summer before I started my undergraduate degree. For almost two years, I worked at the Financial Aid

Office, where I obtained experience in the processes of financial aid. There I was able to learn more about the university processes and find my passion for helping and supporting students. My second student assistant position was at the Office of the Registrar. There I discovered that I was able to learn policies and procedures at a faster pace than my colleagues, it came naturally to me, and with ease, I had not found in any other part of my life. As a student assistant, I realized that my place was in higher education and that I wanted my career to be in higher education where I could help and support students.

Staff Positions

In October 2008, I was offered my first staff position at a four-year university, there as an administrative support assistant, I would begin to learn the processes of an academic department. As an administrative support assistant, I provided support for the department chair. He would take me along to events to help answer department questions and provide general support. Two years later, I was promoted to the administrative support coordinator of the department, where my responsibilities grew. Two years later, a more significant role in the college became available, and I was encouraged to apply. It was then that I was hired as the administrative analyst specialist. With each position, I began to learn more about academic affairs. I found that I was able to provide support to students, support that was difficult to find during my undergraduate degree. At the same time, while my career grew, I was able to be a familiar face for students that I was not able to find during my undergraduate career. When I had the

opportunity to provide support to Latinx students, I was asked to share my story, they wanted to know my journey, and so I shared it with pride.

Learning about Graduate School

When I first began my career in higher education, I was not aware of graduate school. It was with my first staff position at a four-year university that I discovered graduate school and came to realize that it was an option at the university I had just graduated from. At this point, I found it to be an option for other students but not for myself. I took in all the information, mastered the information to be able to share it with any and every person I came in contact with. My goal was to make the process of applying and completing a graduate degree as straightforward as possible. My goal was also to ensure students did not waste any time or money in the process. In mastering my job and the program information, I was able to help the departments I worked in to raise their enrollment and completion rates. After working in higher education for three years and assisting others to learn about graduate school and graduate from a master's program, I felt that graduate school was an option for me. It was then in 2011, four years after I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English, that I applied with the encouragement and support of a few individuals I now call mentors.

Sharing Graduate School Information

Beginning my higher education career in academic affairs meant that I had to help in promoting graduate school. From 2008 to 2018, I would promote

various graduate programs and streamline information so that students were able to understand requirements and guidelines with ease. Graduate school seemed complicated for some to understand. So, for each graduate program, I was required to promote, I would rebrand the program and simplify the way information was delivered to prospects. I would attend university events so that students were aware that graduate school was an option. Even if they were not interested in the program, I was “selling,” I wanted students to know that they had an opportunity of furthering their education. Many times, I came to find out that students were not thinking of what happened after their Bachelor of Arts or Science degree. Students would ask about other possible graduate programs, and so I began connecting them with other graduate programs' points of contact. My goal, in the end, was to provide graduate school awareness and inform students of their options so that they had all possible information in hand to make a decision if graduate school was an academic goal they wanted to consider.

Realization – Where Have all the Latinx Students Gone?

For ten years, I worked with graduate students in some capacity. I worked with students from three different programs with subprograms within each one. After a few years, I came to realize there was one population missing in all graduate programs I was working for: Latinx. While the institution I worked for was diverse and categorized as a Hispanic Serving Institution, the graduate programs I had worked for did not show the diversity for which the institution was proud of. Being a Latina myself and in a graduate program, I felt comfortable to

say that Latinxs were missing at the graduate level in this particular college. This is not to say there were no Latinxs in graduate programs because there were, but they were rare. I made it my goal to seek out Latinxs and provide them with graduate school information to be able to, at the very least, share with them my story and reassure them that graduate school was a goal they could accomplish. I did not understand why this population was not applying to the graduate programs within the college that I was working for. They were present at the undergraduate level, and they were the majority at the institution as a whole yet, they were not present at the graduate level. I witnessed the enrollment gap for Latinxs firsthand, I did my best in helping begin to close the gap, but I was not equipped with all the information I needed to best support my brothers and sisters in the academic world.

My Graduate Degree Experience

My road to graduate school was filled with self-doubt and fear. My greatest fear was applying, and my colleagues reviewing my transcripts and being found out that I graduated with a below-average Grade Point Average (GPA). While I applied with encouragement from mentors, in my heart, I was sure I would receive a denial letter. It was to my surprise after an interview with the program director that I was accepted into a nationally ranked program. With this acceptance, I entered a new chapter in my life.

Reason to Attend Graduate School

In another life, graduate school may have either not been a factor in my life or one that would have occurred until much later in life. In 2011, by choice, my partner and I became pregnant with twins. We were thrilled to begin our family as I felt I was finally going to accomplish what was expected of me. Being the only daughter, I was excited that my parents were going to be proud that I was going to become a mother after years of waiting. Everyone would be waiting for another six years; my life would take a different route. In August 2011, I miscarried twins and thus changed my life drastically. I am unsure as to where I would be today if I would have given birth to those two babies. What I know is motherhood is challenging and graduate school would not have been a thought or a goal of mine. Life would have been vastly different. After taking some time to mourn my loss, I applied to graduate school that fall and began graduate classes in January 2012. I applied to graduate school to prove to myself that I was capable of accomplishing something I was unsure of and scared of. Internally I used graduate school more of a distraction but a distraction I needed to be able to survive a loss more significant than myself. I often think of One and Two (the twin pregnancy), I try to imagine my life as a mother of twins, and it is a thought I cannot fathom. I had suffered a grand loss but used that sadness and sorrow to enter a new chapter in my life as a graduate student.

When I was accepted into graduate school, I told myself that I would treat the classes as part of my job requirements. This was all the more apparent for

me as the graduate program I was accepted into was housed in the department I was currently working in. This meant that the professors I would help with travel requests and professional development were the same professors that were assigned to my course work. I felt all the more pressured to do well, ask questions, and submit my best work. I attended college the first time because it was something that was expected of me, it was difficult for me, but I pushed through. I attended graduate school for myself. I had nothing to lose as an employee; my coursework would be paid for, and the only cost out of pocket would be textbooks and supplemental fees for online courses that I choose to enroll in.

More importantly, I attended graduate school because I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of doing something that had never been done in my family. Graduate school was never spoken of in my family, and it was something that was not understood. It was so foreign that I had to learn the word to accurately translate to my parents the level of schooling I would be completing. Through my career, I would see students complete their graduate degrees, and it would empower me. I felt that if they were able to complete a graduate degree with all their responsibilities and challenges that it could also be something that I was capable of accomplishing.

Family Obligations

As a graduate student, I had minimal family obligations. I was no longer living with my parents and was married to a supportive partner who listened and

understood what was expected of me. He understood that my classes were fully online and thus would require me to spend hours working on an assignment or attend class virtually. He understood that when I would attend a class in person, that meant that I would be home late. Regardless of being married and financially independent of my parents, they still felt they had a say in my life. For example, during my first year in graduate school, I was presented with the opportunity to study abroad for a week in South Korea. My parents did not support my decision to accept this opportunity and voiced their concerns. For them, they felt it was not proper for a married woman to leave her husband behind to travel alone with other students that my husband did not know. It was then that I made a choice to not be the good Mexican daughter they had come to know and follow my own path. Aside from my parents not being able to understand my new academic goal, I did not have any family obligations that stood in my way of completing my graduate degree. This was the first time that I was able to focus on my own path without any family pressure.

Loneliness and Lack of Familiar Faces – Still a Factor

During my undergraduate degree, I struggled with loneliness. I felt alone and did not have an outlet to speak to someone similar to my culture. This feeling carried over to graduate school. While I knew the professors and I knew the students, I still felt alone. I felt alone in that no one before me in my family had gone through a graduate program, and no one understood the stress I was feeling. Loneliness was not as big of a factor as it was during my undergraduate

career but still one that made me feel like an outsider and unsure if I belong in the program regardless of my acceptance and good grades. I pushed through this loneliness that used to break me and cause me stress. Instead, I would remind myself that graduate school was a requirement for my position. I built my own community and found myself taking the lead in creating study groups for the comprehensive exam that was required to graduate. While I felt alone in the process, I soon realized that I was not the only student that felt this way. Many students in the program had their own feeling of loneliness and isolation for their own personal reasons.

The lack of familiar face carried over to my graduate school experience. The professors and students in the program did not look like me, and they did not share the same culture. This made me question my place in higher education. I was unsure if a graduate degree was going to help me grow as I still was not seeing someone in a high-level position that looked like me. I was uncertain if a graduate degree was something that I should aspire to obtain, but this time, older and with more experience, I reminded myself that I was studying for this degree, not for someone else but for myself. Granted, there was a lack of Latinxs in graduate school and a lack of Latinxs at the faculty and administrative level, but I did not let that feeling of being one of the few overwhelm me or scare me off. The goal of obtaining a graduate degree was one I planned to accomplish for myself, and so I focused on my goal and not the fact that an institution that would pride itself on being student diverse lacked diversity in faculty and administration.

Mentorship – A Factor in my Success

I credit my success in graduate school to mentors. Without them, I would never have applied to graduate school or done so well. I felt comfortable and empowered to ask questions and speak to my mentors about my career goals in higher education. It was in my first year of working in higher education that I realized the importance of mentors. From that moment on, I would ensure that I had at least one mentor, which I could ask questions and obtain their input on my plans. If it weren't for my mentors, I don't believe I would have applied and graduated with my graduate degree. While I did the majority of the work, it was with them that I was able to find my place in the sea of white faces and find my determination to accomplish something I had not realized was an option for me.

Mentorship Made me the Academic I am Today

I have found the power of mentoring is much like the teacher-student relationship. Much of who I am now as a professional is attributed to the mentors, I had in the past ten years. While my parents shaped me into the person I am today, it was mentors that guided me through unfamiliar waters and helped make me comfortable to take on goals that were unheard of in my family. It was because of mentors that I applied to graduate school, and in ten years, received four promotions. As doors opened, I made sure to hold those doors open and, in turn, become a mentor myself.

Found Guidance and Support

Mentoring changes lives, and I am proof of that. Before I had a mentor, my goals ended at obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree and an entry-level position at a local university. Once I was taken under someone's wings, I was able to realize there was no need to settle. My need for mentorship was a great one. My family had already provided me with all the tools they were able to pass down to me, but I needed and wanted more. I was able to fill that void with the leaders that I found around me. My first mentor was my supervisor. While I first believed that he was taking me to events to help support him as my role required, I came to realize that in reality, he was teaching me skills that I had not yet mastered. He taught me how to network, how to best present myself in various work settings, and he taught me how to help individuals feel welcomed. My second mentor, a professor, was one that saw potential in me that I had not yet realized. He would ask me difficult questions that I did not know how to answer, but they were not meant to be answered. What he provided me was to question and to then reflect and realize that there was more. It was because of him that I began to challenge myself at work and with my education. He was my sounding board, and he would encourage me to not settle for less.

Beginning to Seek out Mentors

With firsthand knowledge of the importance of mentors, I began to seek out mentors that would help me grow as a professional. Seeking out mentors was a difficult task for me. As I had previously mentioned, due to my sheltered

life, I then developed into an introvert. With time I learned to be an ambivert to be able to push through my initial reaction to being shy. When needed, I was able to tap into my extrovert side, which was necessary for the line of work that I had chosen. In time I found a pattern in my mentors, they were all males, and they were all white.

Mentored by White Men, Seeking out Latina Mentors

In recent years I came to realize that my mentors have all been white males. This came to a surprise to me as for years, I had been seeking out individuals that looked like me. As I had previously mentioned through my undergraduate career, I did not see any individuals that looked like me or shared my culture. Yet, as I began my professional career, the individuals that were mentoring me and taking me on as their mentee were white males. While this realization came to me as a surprise. It did not take away from all the good that my mentors provided me. As a doctoral student, I then began to continue to seek out mentorship and would seek out the Latinas that I had now found in higher education. I requested to meet with Latina professors and administrators. The outcome was a difficult one for me to accept. These familiar faces would either not respond to my request for an informative meeting, or they would inform me they were too busy to meet with me. On the off chance that I did land a meeting to speak with a Latina in the university setting. I found that the meeting would always end on a positive note. Yet, if I would request a follow-up meeting or if I were seeking advice on my resume or cover letter, I no longer received a

response. While they offered that they would be willing to meet with me again, and they offered to review my resume, I was professionally ghosted. Being professionally ghosted then left me all the more confused that when I would seek out other mentors I would revert back to the white male. They were willing to meet with me and were responsive. It made me want to be the change, and so I began to take on mentees.

Graduating to Becoming a Mentor

When I chose to become a mentor, I quickly realized that I had been mentoring individuals for years without officially being their mentor. I would mentor my colleagues on how to improve their resume or do well in an interview. I would mentor staff within my department on how to grow within their position and provide advice on how to seek out opportunities. I would coach staff on professionalism and how to begin to network. What was once offered to me without asking, I was doing the same, now as a well-seasoned employee of the university. I was able to graduate, becoming a mentor by volunteering with various programs at the university I worked at. When I made myself available, I was able to help individuals with questions on the graduate school experience, how to improve their resume, cover letters, and ways they can dress professionally for an interview with limited funds.

As previously mentioned, I believe that mentorship is powerful and, if done correctly, has the power to change lives. As a product of the Rialto Unified School District, I am striving to give back to my community in working with my old

high school to create a mentor program at a high school that has a large number of first-generation students. Mentorship has played a massive part in who I am today. Research shows that mentorship is essential for all individuals, and with my experience and knowledge, I hope to be able to mentor individuals and help them similar to how countless mentors have helped me.

Research shows that mentoring is vital in a student's growth (Lyon et al., 1999). In referencing the literature review, when students experience a close relationship with a faculty member or agent of change, they, in turn, have a more vibrant academic education than those who did not have a mentorship relationship. For students who are first-generation college and first-generation born in the United States, mentorship is all the more prudent as they are the trailblazer of their family. It is better to support our students to help brighten the future. Education is vital in their lives, but without guidance, these students may lose time and motivation, something that they cannot afford.

Imposter Syndrome – The Academic Monster

Researchers Paulina Clance and Suzanne Imes (1978) define imposter syndrome as a psychological pattern where an individual sees themselves as a fraud and fear that in due time, people will discover that they are incompetent. These individuals who struggle with imposter syndrome downplay the significance of their achievements and point their accomplishments to luck or other forces outside of their control, rather than their effort, dedication, and intelligence (Clance & Imes, 1978). Individuals with imposters syndrome all share

one fear: that people will soon realize that they are frauds and undeserving of their successes and accomplishments. Imposter syndrome has been a monster that I have been battling for decades before I realized it was something that 70% of people struggle with (Clance & Imes, 1978). As an academic, when I first heard of imposter syndrome, I felt a sense of relief because the thoughts I had believed for years had a name, and it was not just something I was struggling with alone. Though I was able to give my academic monster a name, it did not mean that I was able to battle it and overcome it. Imposter syndrome is still something I struggle with today and may be something that I battle for years to come.

I am Not Worthy

When I first began receiving academic accolades is when imposter syndrome began. I did not feel deserving. Though I was working hard to do well in school, it did not feel as though I was worthy of the accolades I received. I was sure that there was always some administrative error, and in due time, I would be reviled as the poor student I had known all through grade school. The accolades continued until college. That is when the hardship returned, and I knew that I was not worthy of my past accomplishments, my truth was that I was a poor student who somehow ended up in college. While I graduated from college with my Bachelor of Arts degree, I felt like it was a mistake, and eventually, my degree would be removed from my record. I did not feel worthy of my accomplishment so

much so that I could not bear to attend my graduation ceremony, and I did not celebrate my receiving my degree.

This feeling of not being worthy continued on into my graduate school experience. With hard work, I was able to maintain a 3.0-grade point average or higher through my course work. This is not to say that I did not work hard or was not dedicated during my undergraduate degree because I was, but graduate course work felt different. I was not sure if it was my higher education experience or my age or a combination of both that helped the course work click in my mind. Though I was getting better marks in my course work with every new course, I was sure that that would be the course that I would fail, and I would then be removed from the program. This ultimate course never came, and I successfully passed all course work. When the time came, and all course work was completed, I would need to sit for the comprehensive exam. I dedicated six months to study. I put to use all the advice that I had provided past graduates on how to pass the exam. As well as the information that professors would offer to all their students. I was sure that the grades I received in the program were mere luck. I had seen in the past students earn high marks and still not pass the comprehensive exam; I was sure I would fall victim to this fate. This was not the case. After six months of studying, I received news that I had passed. While I was overjoyed and cried tears of happiness, I still felt as though I failed because I merely passed and did not obtain a high pass. I thought that I should have done

better, and I did not accomplish more because I was not the person that people thought I was.

Imposter syndrome has followed me up until this moment while writing this chapter. Though I understand imposter syndrome and I reassure myself that I am deserving of all my accomplishments, I still believe the lies the academic monster tells me. Through my doctoral program, I completed all my course work with high marks, but that surely was a fluke. Everyone received high marks. Regardless of what I accomplished, I felt as though someone surely made a mistake, and in due time, I would be asked to leave the doctoral program. As I moved along and completed each step successfully, I refused to celebrate any achievement, fearing it would be ripped away from me when I would be found out to be undeserving. It is difficult for me to imagine that I have earned everything that I have accomplished. The academic monster either had me believe that what I accomplished was either that I got lucky or that what I accomplished was not enough, and I should have achieved more.

Where are my Fellow Latinx Academics?

In trying to understand imposter syndrome better, I began to realize that my feelings were all the more present due to the lack of familiar faces. Through my academic career, I did not have the opportunity to take a course that was taught by a fellow Latinx. As previously mentioned, from grade school and on, I felt lost in a sea of white faces. I did not see professors or even students that looked like me within my academic programs. That changed during my first

quarter in the doctoral program. I had a moment in which I believed that because I had finally found a fellow Latinx professor and what I was striving for could be possible for me. When I looked at my classmates, I found faces that looked like mine, and I felt that I had found my place in the academic world. Then the academic monster, Imposter Syndrome, resurfaced, and I began to believe the lies. While the professor was Latinx and I had Latinx classmates, they were more deserving than me, and they did not face the challenges I had to face. Their accomplishments were well earned, and mine were not. They were intelligent, and I somehow slipped through the cracks of the academic system and found myself in the seat of a doctoral student. I was undeserving, and everyone knew it.

I Will Be the Change

Imposter syndrome may be something that I will continue to battle with, but what I have found is through self-reflection and education. I have come to understand this challenge so that I can help others. During my higher education experience, I would listen to students share their fears and worries. They would say statements that sounded very familiar to me because they were statements, I would say. I knew and understood what they were feeling and would use my experience to help students work past the moment. Using my understanding and experience with the academic monster, I was able to help others work past moments of uncertainty.

In the past decade, I have had the opportunity to help countless students work through their insecurities. All at the same time while I was working through my own. Based on all that I have experienced and all that I have learned, I hope to be able to help more students with imposter syndrome. I am fortunate enough that I have been asked to speak to students about overcoming imposter syndrome at a student leadership conference. I hope that in doing so, I can save students from the academic monster so that they do not need to spend decades fearing that they will one day be found out that they do not deserve their academic accomplishments.

I will be the change, and I am deserving, and while I have support and I have mentors. The truth is, “Nobody’s going to save you. No one’s going to cut you down, cut the thorns thick around you. No one’s going to storm the castle walls nor kiss awake your birth, climb down your hair, nor mount you onto the white steed. There is no one who will feed the yearning. Face it. You have to do it, do it yourself” (Anzaldua, 1987). I must first always be my own support and embrace that I am deserving, no one else will be able to fight the academic monster I have been battling all my life.

Conclusion

As a first-generation college graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a Master’s in Public Administration, I am now part of the six percent in the Inland Empire to hold a graduate degree (Johnson et al., 2008). While working in higher education, I have been privileged with having mentors to guide me

through my graduate experience and professional experience. More importantly, I had and have financial and family support to be able to accomplish academic goals. Through my experiences, education, and work, I have come to understand how rare this support is for the Latinx population. As previously discussed, the Latinx community is faced with many challenges such as poverty, English as a second language, family and financial obligations, loneliness, and lack of mentors. They then are also faced with barriers such as lack of knowledge of the higher education system, lack of guidance and support, and standardized exams. As a first-generation Latina, I was faced with many of these challenges and barriers. With each step in my education, these challenges and barriers changed, but nonetheless, they were present. My academic journey has been a difficult one and a lonely one but still worthy of celebration.

Through my self-discovering journey, I have found that I am not defined by the fact that my parents immigrated to the United States and speak broken English or that my skin color is brown. I am not defined by the degrees I have obtained and will obtain. I am not defined by the challenges that I have long been ashamed of and built walls I had to climb over. I am defined by my parents. Who sought a better life for their children, left home, and their families behind for their children. I am defined by the resilient women that grew to follow her dreams regardless of statistics and fear. I am defined by so much more because...

I am a first-generation Latina.

I am a wife.

I am a mother.

I am a doctoral student.

I am a boss.”

[...and with my head held high,

I am enough,

I am proud,

I am deserving,

I am accomplished,

...and I am Doctora Deborah Dorado Grijalva]

(Grijalva, 2019)

APPENDIX A:
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Google Form Survey Questions

1. How do you self-identify?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Rather not say
2. What is your age group?
 - a. 17-19
 - b. 20-25
 - c. 26-30
 - d. 31-35
 - e. 36-45
 - f. 46-55
 - g. 56 or older
3. What is your class standing?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. Credential
 - f. Graduate (Master level)
 - g. Doctoral
4. What college is your major in?
 - a. College of Arts and Letters
 - b. Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration
 - c. College of Education
 - d. College of Natural Sciences
 - e. College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
 - f. Graduate Interdisciplinary Studies
 - g. Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Studies
 - h. Undeclared
5. Regarding your ethnicity, do you consider yourself a Latina? The term “Latina” is being used in the study to be inclusive of all ethnic backgrounds that identify with the Latino identity as a female.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Are you the first in your family to attend college?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Are you first-generation in the United States? In this study first-generation is defined as a student/alumnus with parents born outside of the United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That

student/alumni (descendent) is the first (along with any siblings) to be born in the United States to parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university.

- a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Do you have siblings?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
9. If you do have siblings? Are you responsible to care for them?
- a. Yes
 - b. Open Ended – Please elaborate on how much you are responsible to care for your siblings in the following section:
 - c. No
10. What is the highest level of education of your mother?
- a. Elementary
 - b. Middle School
 - c. Some High School
 - d. High School
 - e. Trade/Technical training
 - f. Some College (no degree)
 - g. Associate/Community college degree
 - h. Bachelor's Degree
 - i. Master's Degree
 - j. Professional degree (e.g., DDS, JD, MD)
 - k. Doctoral (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.)
11. What is the highest level of education of your father?
- a. Elementary
 - b. Middle School
 - c. Some High School
 - d. High School
 - e. Trade/Technical training
 - f. Some College (no degree)
 - g. Associate/Community college degree
 - h. Bachelor's Degree
 - i. Master's Degree
 - j. Professional degree (e.g., DDS, JD, MD)
 - k. Doctoral (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.)
12. What is your current living situation?
- a. Live with parents
 - b. Live with extended family
 - c. Live on campus (university housing)
 - d. Live off campus on your own
 - e. Live off campus with roommates
 - f. Other, please specify: _____

13. Are you required to contribute financially to your family household?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Open Ended – Please elaborate how you contribute financially to your family household in the following section:
 - c. No
14. Do you have a mentor(s)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
15. In your college experience have you had a professor that shares your ethnicity/gender?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Open Ended – Please elaborate how this has had an impact on your academic career in the following section:
 - c. No
16. Are you aware that your university has graduate school? In this study graduate school is defined as the master level
 - a. Yes
 - b. Open Ended – Please elaborate how you first became aware of graduate school in the following section:
 - c. No
17. Are you aware that graduate school can cost as low as \$14,500 for the whole degree?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Open Ended – Please elaborate on how you first became aware of the cost in the following section:
 - c. No
18. Are you aware that you can apply to graduate school outside of your current college/major?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Open Ended – Please elaborate on how you first became aware of the cost in the following section:
 - c. No
19. Do you plan to apply to graduate school? As a reminder, in this study graduate school is defined as the master level
 - a. Yes
 - b. Open Ended – Please elaborate on why you plan to apply to graduate school in the following section
 - c. No
 - d. Open Ended – Please elaborate on why you do not plan to apply to graduate school in the following section
 - e. Currently Attending
 - f. Open Ended – Please elaborate on why you first applied to graduate school in the following section
 - g. Unsure

- h. Open Ended – Please elaborate on why you are unsure about applying to graduate school in the following section
20. Would you be willing to sit for a one-on-one interview for follow-up questions?
- a. Yes
 - b. Please provide your contact information
 - i. First Name (Only)
 - ii. Class Standing
 - iii. Phone Number
 - c. No
21. In appreciation for completing the survey, you can choose to be entered to win an Amazon gift card please enter your e-mail address below or select Not Interested. An email will be sent to the winners. Please note that you will ONLY be contacted if you win and will not be contacted for a follow-up interview if you selected that you would not be willing to sit for a one-on-one interview. Your chances are not increased if you indicate that you are willing to sit for a one-on-one interview.
- a. Email: _____
 - b. Not Interested

APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

Participant Name:

Date: _____

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during the interview process, please let me know. We can either take a break from the interview or terminate the interview if necessary. I will be taking notes of your responses and ask to follow up questions for clarification. As mentioned in the informed consent form, I will be using a digital recording device to record the interview. If you are uncomfortable being recorded, please let me know. I can stop the recording at any point during the interview process and, with your permission, take handwritten notes. Any quotes from this interview may be used in the dissertation publication. Your identity will always remain anonymous and confidential. Only I will know your identity and will protect it. Do you have any questions about the consent form? Having read the consent form, do you still agree to be a part of the study? If so, may I begin recording?

[Start Recording]

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What is the last grade your mother completed? Father? Siblings?
3. Was higher education talked about in your home growing up? If yes, how was it discussed?
4. Did your parents have expectations of you with regards to higher education? If yes, what were their expectations?
5. Why did you personally choose to attend college?
6. Are you considering further education beyond your undergraduate or current degree? What would make you more likely to apply? (*Non-graduate student/Non-graduate alumni only*)
7. If you do plan to apply to graduate school or have applied, what led you to be interested in graduate school? (*Non-graduate student/Non-graduate alumni only*)
8. Why did you apply to graduate school? (*Current graduate students or graduate alumni only*)
9. What helped you through your graduate program? (*Current graduate students or graduate alumni only*)
10. Do you have, or have you had a mentor?
 - a. What is their gender?
 - b. Ethnicity?
 - c. Education?
11. When did you first meet your mentor?

12. How did the mentorship begin?
13. If you don't have a mentor, have you attempted to obtain one? Why? Why not?
14. When is the first time you took a course in which the professor shared the same ethnicity as you? Did this have an effect on you?
15. What has been the greatest challenge for you in your academic career?
 - a. What helped you overcome this challenge?
16. Is there anything that you feel is relevant that I have not asked that you want to share?

APPENDIX C:
LETTER OF CONSENT - SURVEY

Introduction

The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of the enrollment gap for a particular population in graduate school.

Procedures

The procedure involves filling an online survey that will take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses will be confidential, and we do not collect identifying information such as your full name or IP address. The survey questions will be multiple choice and short answer responses.

Risk/Discomforts

Risks are minimal for involvement in this study. The survey is anonymous.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participants.

Confidentiality

All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregated format (by reporting only combined results and never reporting individual ones). All questionnaires will be concealed, and no one other than the primary investigator and dissertation chair listed below will have access to them. That data collected will be in a password protected electronic format. The survey will not contain information that will personally identify you to help protect your confidentiality. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

Compensation

There is no direct compensation, but as a participant, you will have a choice to enter a drawing to win an Amazon gift card.

Participation

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy. If you desire to withdraw, please close your Internet browser to exit the survey. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

Questions about the Research

The research is being collected by Deborah Grijalva, an Educational Leadership Doctoral student at California State University, San Bernardino. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are a) student of the institution or b) an alumnus of the institution.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Deborah Grijalva at grijalvad@coyote.csusb.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding the survey and do not feel comfortable contacting the researcher, you may contact her dissertation chair, Dr. Jay Fiene at jfiene@csusb.edu.

By signing or clicking “accept” you give your consent to be a participant in this study.

Print Full Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D:
E-MAIL REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

Greetings,

My name is Deborah Grijalva, I am a doctoral candidate at California State University, San Bernardino's Educational Leadership program. My dissertation, "*Graduate School Awareness for First-generation Latinas: Cracking the Glass Ceiling – A Validation Study*," aims to gain a better understanding of the enrollment gap for a particular population in graduate school.

I am reaching out to you because you have been identified as meeting the criteria of the study:

- Self-identify as Latinx
- Self-identify as female (i.e., Latina)
- Between the age group of 20-45
- First-generation (Students/alumni with parents born outside of the United States and in a country from Mexico or South America. That student (descendant) is the first to be born in the United States to parents who have a high school education or less and is the first in their family to attend university).
- Hold a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree or be in their last year of their undergraduate program, or be in a graduate program, or an alumnus from the institution

Additionally, you have either indicated that you would be willing to sit down for a follow up one on one interview when you completed the survey which was sent to the study body or was identified by one of your colleagues that you are alumni from the university. I would greatly appreciate if you will continue to participate in my research and would like to schedule a meeting with you. The interview will last between 30 to 60 minutes. I will be able to meet you at a location most convenient for you. If you are unable to meet in person, I would be happy to set up a meeting viz Zoom which is video and web conferencing service.

Please let me know if you would be willing to consider my request and participate in my research. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

With Kind Regards,
Deborah Grijalva, MPA
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership | Cohort 11
California State University, San Bernardino
grijalvad@coyote.csusb.edu

APPENDIX E:
E-MAIL REQUEST FOR SURVEY

Greetings Students and Alumni,

My name is Deborah Grijalva, I am a doctoral candidate at California State University, San Bernardino's Educational Leadership program. My dissertation, "Graduate School Awareness for First-generation Latinas: Cracking the Glass Ceiling – A Validation Study," aims to gain a better understanding of the enrollment gap for a particular population in graduate school.

You are receiving this electronic message as you are either a student or alumni from California State University, San Bernardino. I would greatly appreciate it if you participate in my research and complete the following survey. This survey is both multiple choice and open-ended questions. This survey should take no more than 20 to 30 minutes to complete. I would greatly appreciate it if you will take the time to complete my survey. For those of you that do, when you open the link you will first be asked to complete a consent form.

[Click here to begin the Survey](#)

With Kind Regards,

Deborah Grijalva, MPA
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership | Cohort 11
California State University, San Bernardino
grijalvad@coyote.csusb.edu

APPENDIX F:
LETTER OF CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this survey is to gain a better understanding of the enrollment gap for a particular population in graduate school.

Procedures

The procedure at this step involves a one-on-one interview that will require between 30 to 60 minutes of your time. If necessary, a second interview may be requested at a later date for follow up questions or clarification. Interviews will be conducted based on your preference; this can be either face-to-face or via Zoom, a video and web conference service. The time and location of the interview are at your convenience. With your permission, all interviews will be audio recorded.

Risk/Discomforts

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this study. Participants will not be identifiable by name.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for participants of this study.

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used in place of all participants' names and institution attending/attended. Your name will never be used, and your anonymity will be necessary for my research. Furthermore, I will be the only individual who has access to the information obtained from all participants during the interview process. All audio recordings of interviews and notes will remain stored in a locked file cabinet. The audio recordings will be transcribed word for word. To ensure the data collected is protected it will be stored in the researcher's home office in a locked file cabinet on a password-protected device.

Audio

To ensure accurate data collection and for later review, I will be recording the interview on two recording devices. The purpose of two recorders is to ensure that all information is noted and, in the case, that one recorder does not perform properly. Please indicate you are willing to consent by initialing below. In any use of this digital recording, your name will not be identified. If you do not want to be recorded, I will only take handwritten notes. *I understand this research interview will be audio recorded. Please initial if you agree: _____*

Compensation

Participants for one-on-one interviews will be gifted a \$20 gift card as a thank you for your time.

Participation

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy regardless of signing this letter of consent. You can decide not to answer all or specific questions in the interview. If you desire to withdraw, please let me know as soon as possible. There will be no penalty of any kind if you decide not to participate in this study.

Questions about the Research

The research is being collected by Deborah Grijalva, an Educational Leadership Doctoral student at California State University, San Bernardino. You are invited to participate in this research project because you are a) student of the institution or b) an alumnus of the institution.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Deborah Grijalva at grijalvad@coyote.csusb.edu.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding the survey and do not feel comfortable contacting the researcher, you may contact her dissertation chair, Dr. Jay Fiene at jfiene@csusb.edu.

By signing or clicking “accept” you give your consent to be a participant in this study.

Print Full Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX G:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

November 25, 2019

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Administrative/Exempt Review Determination

Status: Determined Exempt

IRB-FY2020-81

Ms. Deborah Grijalva and Prof. Jay Fiene
COE - Doctoral Studies
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Grijalva and Prof. Fiene:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Graduate School Awareness for First-generation Latinas: Cracking the Glass Ceiling - A Validation Study" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of California State University, San Bernardino has determined that your application meets the requirements for exemption from IRB review Federal requirements under 45 CFR 46. As the researcher under the exempt category you do not have to follow the requirements under 45 CFR 46 which requires annual renewal and documentation of written informed consent which are not required for the exempt category. However, exempt status still requires you to attain consent from participants before conducting your research as needed. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee the following three requirements highlighted below. Please note failure of the investigator to notify the IRB of the below requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- Submit a protocol modification (change) form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before implemented in your study to ensure the risk level to participants has not increased,
- If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research, and

- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system when your study has ended.

The protocol modification, adverse/unanticipated event, and closure forms are located in the Cayuse IRB System. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG

REFERENCES

- 20 U.S. code § 1101a - Definitions; eligibility. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1101a>
- 20 U.S. code § 1102a - Program authority and eligibility. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1102a>
- 20 U.S. code § 1102 - Purposes. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/20/1102>
- Academic year 2019-2020. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.csusb.edu/student-financial-services/tuition-and-fees/academic-year-2019-2020>
- Acker, S. (1987). Feminist theory and the study of gender and education. *International review of education*, 33(4), 419-435.
doi:10.1007/bf00615157
- Bacallao, M. L., & Smokowski, P. R. (2007). The costs of getting ahead: Mexican family system changes after immigration. *Family Relations*, 56(1), 52-66.
doi:10.1111/j.1741 3729.2007.00439.x
- Berg, G. A., & Tollefson, K. (2014). Latina/o student perceptions of post-baccalaureate education: Identifying challenges to increased participation. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 13(4), 296-308.
doi:10.1080/15348431.2014.887470
- Ceja, M. (2006) Understanding the role of parents and siblings as information sources in the college choice process of Chicana students. *Journal of*

College Student Development.47(1), pp.87-104.

doi:10.1353/csd.2006.0003

Children's, C. (2020). Hydrocephalus. (2014, October 1). Retrieved, from
<https://www.choc.org/neuroscience/hydrocephalus/>

Contreras, F., & Contreras, G. (2015). Raising the bar for Hispanic serving institutions. *Journal Of Hispanic Higher Education*, 14(2), 151-170.

doi:10.1177/1538192715572892

Contreras, F. E., Malcom, L. E., & Bensimon, E. M. (2008). Hispanic serving institutions. *Understanding minority serving institutions*, 71-90.

Crenshaw, K. (2016). The urgency of intersectionality. Retrieved from
https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality

Creswell, J. (2011). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson College Division.

Dayton, B., Gonzalez-Vasquez, N., Martinez, C. R., & Plum, C. (2004).

Hispanic-serving institutions through the eyes of students and administrators. *New directions for student services*, 2004(105), 29-40.

Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Title V. (2020, February 6).

Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/dueshsi/index.html>

Doran, E. E. (2015). Negotiating access and tier one aspirations. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 14(4), 343-354.

doi:10.1177/1538192715570638

- Espinoza, R. (2010). The good daughter dilemma: Latinas managing family and school demands. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 9(4), pp.317-330.
doi:10.1177/1538192710380919
- Engaging Undergraduate Women of Color. In (Eds) Quaye & Harper. *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations*, P. 39-54.
- Fry, R. (2002). *Latinos in higher education: Many enroll, too few graduate*. Washington, DC: PEW Hispanic Center. Retrieved from:
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED468848.pdf>
- Frankforter, S. A. (1996). The progression of women beyond the glass ceiling. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, 11(5), 121-132.
- Funding Status -- Title V developing Hispanic-serving institutions program. (2020, January 23). Retrieved from
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/dueshsi/funding.html>
- Gándara, P. C., & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies*: Cambridge. Harvard University Press.
- Gándara, P. (2010). The Latino education crisis. *Educational Leadership*, 67(5), 24-30.
- Gándara, P. (2015). *Fulfilling America's future: Latinas in the U.S.*, 2015.

- Gándara, P., & Mordechay, K. (2017, April). Demographic change and the new (and not so new) challenges for Latino education. In *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 148-159). Routledge, 2017.
- Garcia, G. A. (2016). Complicating a Latina/o-serving identity at a Hispanic serving institution. *The Review of Higher Education*, 40(1), 117-143. doi:10.1353/rhe.2016.0040
- Good for business: *Making full use of the nation's human capital: the environmental scan: a fact-finding report of the federal glass ceiling commission*. (1995).
- Grijalva, D. D. (2018). Self-ethnography of a Latina. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1-2. doi:10.1080/15348431.2018.1523792
- Hakim, C. (2006). Women, careers, and work-life preferences. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 34(3), 279-294. doi:10.1080/03069880600769118
- Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)*. (2019). Retrieved 29 April 2019, from <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis>
- Johnson, H. P., Reed, D., & Hayes, J. M. (2008). *The inland empire in 2015*. Public Policy Instit. of CA.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J. L., Buckley, J. A., Bridges, B. K., & Hayek, J. C. (2006). *What matters to student success: A review of the literature*.

- Lango, D. R. (1995). Mexican American female enrollment in graduate programs: A study of the characteristics that may predict success. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 17(1), 33-48. doi: 10.1177/07399863950171002
- Linares, L. I. R., & Muñoz, S. M. (2011). Revisiting validation theory: Theoretical foundations, applications, and extensions. *Enrollment Management Journal*, 2(1), 12-33.
- Lockwood, N. (2004). *The glass ceiling: Domestic and international perspectives* (pp. 1-10). Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.
- Lopez, E. (1995). Challenges and resources of Mexican American students within the family, peer group, and University: Age and gender patterns. *Hispanic Journal Of Behavioral Sciences*, 17(4), 499-508.
doi:10.1177/07399863950174006
- Lynch, M. & Post, K. (1996). What glass ceiling?. *Public Interest*, (124) 27.
- Lyons, W., Scroggins, D., & Rule, P. B. (1990). The mentor in graduate education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 15(3), 277-285.
doi:10.1080/03075079012331377400
- McLaughlin, C. J., & Sillence, E. (2018). Buffering against academic loneliness: The benefits of social media-based peer support during postgraduate study. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 1469787418799185.

- Mills-Strachan, Y., Bahamas, S. B., Carraher, S., & Cash, R. (2009). Women and minorities in corporate America: An empirical examination. *Academy of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, 2.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Percentage of persons 25 to 29 years old with selected levels of educational attainment, by race/ethnicity and sex: Selected years, 1920 through 2013*. [online] Available at: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_104.20.asp [Accessed 24 Jul. 2018].
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2019) *Master's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex of student: Selected years. 1976-77 through 2015-2016* (Table 323.20).
- Newman, B. (2015). Breaking the glass ceiling: Local gender-based earnings inequality and women's belief in the American dream. *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(4),1006-1025. doi: 10.1111/ajps.12195
- Perna, L. W. (2000). Racial/ethnic group differences in the realization of educational plans.
- Posselt, J. R., & Grodsky, E. (2017). Graduate education and social stratification. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 43(1), 353-378.
doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-081715-074324
- Powell, G. N. (2018). *Women and men in management*. Sage Publications.
- Prasad, A. (2001). The glass ceiling effect. *Social Forces*, 80(2), 655-681.
doi:10.1353/sof.2001.0091

- Quaye, S., & Harper, S. (2015). *Student engagement in higher education* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Ramirez, E. (2011). "No one taught me the steps": Latinos' experiences applying to graduate school. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 10(3), 204-222.
doi:10.1080/15348431.2011.581105
- Saldaña, J. (2015). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Solórzano, D. G. (1997) Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping and teacher education, *Teacher education quarterly*, 5-19.
- Solórzano, D. G. (1998) Critical race theory, racial and gender microaggressions, and the experiences of Chicana and Chicano scholars, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11, 121–136.
doi:10.1080/095183998236926
- Student mentoring program. (2020). Retrieved, from
<https://www.csusb.edu/coyote-plus/student-mentoring-program>
- Suarez, S., Fowers, B., Garwood, C., & Szapocznik, J. (1997). Biculturalism, Differentness, loneliness, and alienation in Hispanic college students. *Hispanic Journal Of Behavioral Sciences*, 19(4), 489-505.
doi:10.1177/07399863970194007

- Survey statistical confidence: How many is enough? (2018, August 1). Retrieved from <https://greatbrook.com/survey-statistical-confidence-how-many-is-enough/>
- Sy, S. R., & Romero, J. (2008). Family responsibilities among Latina college students from immigrant families. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 7(3), 212-227. doi:10.1177/1538192708316208
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight 'big-tent' criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.
- We must challenge the systemic hurdles for Latina women. (2017, November 2). Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/we-must-challenge-the-systemic-hurdles-for-latina-women_b_59fb68efe4b0415a420a78f8
- Wilson, E. (2014). Diversity, culture and the glass ceiling. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 21(3), 83-9.
- United States Census Bureau. (2018) *Educational attainment of the population 18 years and over, by age, sex, race, and Hispanic Origin*.
- United States Census Bureau. (2019). *Projected Race and Hispanic Origin*.
- United States Census Bureau. (2019) *Sex by work experience in the past 12 months by earnings in the past 12 months (in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars) for the population 16 years and over (Hispanic or Latino)*
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race ethnicity and education*, 8(1), 69-91.