The Role of Latina Women in Nonprofits

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Abstract

There is a significant underrepresentation of people of color in the nonprofit sector, specifically Latina women. They represent 15% of the entire workforce but account for only 5% of employees while white people account for 82% of the sector (Hagenbach 2012). This thesis examines the role Latina women play in the nonprofit sector, and makes a claim about how there are systemic barriers in place that restrict their leadership advancement to a minimum. Furthermore, this paper identifies how the presence of Latina women in general leadership manifests itself in the nonprofit sector and investigates what opportunities can truthfully make an impact on the career trajectory of a woman of color. Ultimately, this paper argues in favor of an organizational implementation of leadership development for aspiring Latina women who seek to hold higher-level management positions and push for meaningful mentorship partnerships between these organizations and potential Latina women leaders to prepare them for leadership roles.

Keywords: Latina women, nonprofit sector, Latina leadership, management, gender,

Table of Contents

Introduction

The goal of the nonprofit sector is to serve underprivileged communities who have been continuously marginalized, then the Latino population falls under this category. Therefore, it is in the best interest of nonprofit organizations to hire Latino individuals and develop them for leadership. These select individuals can bring first-hand experiences in dealing with the community's needs that will provide them the wisdom on where to allocate resources and outreach efforts effectively so that will then benefit the community. Unfortunately, the nonprofit sector is no stranger to the persistence of minority underrepresentation, particularly that of Latina women. Although studies have demonstrated that they account for a significant portion of the U.S. workforce, they only occupy 5% of leadership positions (Hagenbach 2012). This is not due to a disinterest as a survey conducted by the Building Moving Project (2019) revealed that 49% of women of color nonprofit employees expressed an interest in attaining a top leadership position in their organization. In short there is no justification or evidence that demonstrates a lack of willingness from these women. Neither does a disparity of Latina female workers exist because between 2020-2030 Latino workers will account for 78% of new workers in the workforce (Latinos Lead 2022). There is a greater implicit force at work that is explicitly sidelining Latino employees from being in leadership.

Specifically, leadership in nonprofit organizations historically has been predominantly white-male dominated leadership. Nonprofits of the early twentieth century reflected and reinforced the accepted patriarchal standards of whiteness and masculinity (Heckler 2019). Yet perhaps ironically, nonprofit organizations historically have been majority employed by white women. That characterization remains true today

as female employees make up the majority of the nonprofit workforce at 73% (The White House Project 2006). However this characterization does not account Latina women, it reinforces that the sector is white-female dominated. The reality is that only 18% of staff within nonprofits are people of color, including Latina women (2006). With the sector's demographic being dominated by white men and women, it could result in homogenous hiring because 75% of white Americans have social networks with little to no minority contacts (Winston 2017). Homophily within social networks creates a roadblock for the minorities whose goal is to lead one day, when it proves just as challenging even to get their foot through the door.

The corporate sector similarly suffers from this pancity of Latina women in positions of power. A study conducted by the Pew Center (2020) found that Latino individuals hold 4 percent of executive positions and from that, only 1 percent are Latina women. Both the corporate and nonprofit sector suffer from a clear dissociation between the number of Latina employees and executive positions they hold. Within the corporate sector only two Latina women have been appointed as CEO of a Fortune 500 company, Geisha Jiminez Williams and Cheryl Miller (Herrera 2022). Both Latina CEOs expressed that many times throughout their career before becoming a top executive they were viewed only as caregivers and not as true corporate leaders. It is an unfortunate reality that this dissociation persists within the corporate sector and nonprofit, but particularly nonprofit.

In wanting to understand this issue, I decided it would be best to interview individual executives both Latino and non-Latino to hear first-hand their experiences within this sector. The first-hand experiences from these individuals could provide me

direct insight of those in the field who experience or witness these inequalities persist.

Statistics only show the numbers and not the people behind the numbers. In the following

section, I provide a literature review that breaks down the obstacles that have created this

inequality and further discusses what can be done to overcome them.

Literature Review

2.2 Invisible Barriers At The Top

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (1991), the glass ceiling is defined as

"those artificial barriers based on an attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent

qualified individuals from advancing upward into management-level positions". This

term is widely used to visualize how women, especially women of color in the workplace

can reach a specific position in the organization they work in and no further because of

this invisible force holding them back. In other words, their chances significantly

diminish as these women attempt to move up the hierarchical ladder (Vallas et al 2009).

A deeper look into the existence of the glass ceiling and why it still exists stems from this

dominant male mindset, therefore the majority of the time, female bosses, and much

fewer women of color are rarely taken seriously.

The cream of the top nonprofit organizations is largely defined by this archetype

of white male homogeneity and control. Therefore, any prospective candidates who are

seeking to gain leadership status in an organization will most likely be sidelined if they

do not conform to specific criteria the manager seeks out This is constantly referred to as

homosocial reproduction or "the tendency for managers to seek out and surround

themselves with others like themselves" (Vallas et al 2009). More importantly, for these

organizations that lack diversity in their executive leadership, the possibility of hiring

Latina women in comparison to a candidate who fits the phenotype will be chosen. Here we see the glass ceiling in effect, where women of color, unfortunately, have to work twice as hard to see as valuable assets to managers than their white counterparts both male and female. It is quite unfair that these women have to prove their professional worth solely because they are viewed as "outsiders" in the workplace where quite frankly there are little to no women who share their experience. Through this leveling of an outsider, studies have shown that women of color have even less access than their coworkers to these informal professional networks that are vital to leadership advancement, putting them two steps behind (Vallas et al 2009).

Another important aspect of the glass ceiling is that it reinforces this unsupported perception that a basic requirement of leadership is that an individual holds more stereotypically defined masculine qualities than feminine (Vallas et al 2009). Therefore, if this ideal is believed to be standard, of course, policies will not be built in the organizational structure of companies and organizations with women in mind for career advancement. These stereotypes only strengthen the glass ceiling, proving that women are clearly unfit to step into leadership positions. The following table demonstrates how the behaviors of leaders are connected to female and male stereotypes.

Table #1: *Women and Male Behavior Stereotypes*

Feminine Behaviors - "Taking Care"	*Masculine Behaviors - "Taking Charge"*
Supporting	**Problem-Solving**
Encouraging, assisting, and providing resources for others	Identifying, analyzing, and acting decisively to remove impediments to work performance
Rewarding	**Influencing Upward**
Providing praise, recognition, and	Affecting others in positions of higher

financial remuneration when appropriate	rank
Consulting	**Delegating**
Checking with others before making plans or decisions that affect them	Authorizing others to have substantial responsibility and discretion

Source: "Women 'Take Care', Men 'Take Charge': Stereotyping of U.S. Business Leaders Exposed." *Catalyst* 2005.

The table reiterates that these unjustifiable stereotypes are just further heightened and sharpened at the very top of the executive ladder. Still, it is important to distinguish Latina female stereotypes from general female stereotypes because there are huge differences that determine how they are perceived in the workforce by both coworkers and supervisors. A study was conducted by *Psychology Women Quarterly* (2013) to utilize an intersectional analysis of gender stereotypes. Participants were asked to describe 10 characteristics of various racial and ethnic groups, and the results were fascinating. Specifically for Latina women, the most frequent ones were feisty and loud, but two that stood out to me were curvy and unintelligent. These attributes described by participants are quite shocking and upsetting to see that people at first glance perceive Latina women this way. Unfortunately, this viewpoint negatively impacts Latina women in the workplace because instead of focusing on the quality of work they put out as well as demonstrating their potential for leadership, it will be overlooked because of fictitious stereotypes regarding unintelligence and physical appearance. And even if a Latina woman is successful in shattering the glass ceiling and obtaining that leadership role, the likelihood of facing negative performance expectations only increases (Vallas et al 2009). What's worse is that because employees who are women of color are then viewed under a speculative lens that they are a poor fit, managers then have no real expectations of growth and success from them (Heilman 2001). It does not matter if they have their credentials or a number of accomplishments under their belt, they will continually be overlooked.

2.2 Racial and Gender Bias

The blame for this minority underrepresentation cannot be placed on a singular obstacle but rather divided into various important factors that work in unison to allow it to persist. The first evident barrier is preconceived racial and gender bias towards Latina women. Everyone is susceptible to forming a bias whether it be unconscious or conscious because people depend upon stereotypes. Similar to stereotypes, the status characteristics theory describes that "process through which differences in socially significant characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and education level) help create the social hierarchies observed in task-related group settings" (Nicole 2017). This reliance inevitably influences how individuals understand information about others different from them, then attributing distinctive characteristics to specific gender and racial groups (Bodenhausen et al 1998).

The nonprofit sector is not exempt from bias, even when seemingly operating under a meritocratic model, a system that is governed by individuals chosen by neither class nor wealth but instead on the basis of skills, and talent. Racial and gender bias is embedded into the model of the workforce, especially towards women of color which include Latina women. For example, a study conducted by the Moving Project (2019) surveyed thousands of employees across nonprofit organizations varying by gender and race to learn about any existing obstacles for women of color. The study found that employees who identified as women of color expressed that their race and gender identity negatively impacted their desire to move up in the organization (Biu 2019). Latina employees are at a disadvantage because of racial gender biases. Moreso, many of the participants explained that they had been sidelined for promotions, as preference was obviously placed on their white and/or male counterparts (Biu 2019). This subtle

discrimination stems from an incorrect prejudice that Latina women can not be viable leaders, therefore they are kept out of consideration for leadership advancement.

2.3 Social Networks

Networks are a crucial part of the workplace. While employees' education and experience are equally important, they must go hand in hand with a solid network of connections. For example, Research conducted by Zippia found that "85% of jobs are filled via networking with personal and professional connections" (2023). Education can do much, but connections with the correct professionals makes a huge difference. The makeup of professional networks consist of *weak ties* or acquaintances of individuals because it plays a key role in how jobs are found. In fact "85% of jobs are found through [these] *weak ties*" (Granovetter 1973). Prospective employees seeking to enter the workforce understand this truth, and seek out opportunities to form relationships with key individuals that could potentially open a door for them in the workforce.

Anybody has the potential to form their own social network but the issue at hand is whether connections within an employee's network lead towards growth opportunities. Unfortunately, minorities, particularly women of color, stay three steps behind the crowd when it comes to social networking because while they may have a social network, it could potentially be the *wrong network*. This concept of a *wrong network* details that minorities are in fact utilizing the networks they formed to find jobs, but because of their over-dependence on them for job searching, inherently leads them to low-wage jobs (Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo 2006). These networks have their limitations and can only do so much, and women of color including Latina women are left out of the *good*

network that leads to good jobs. The following is a visual map that details the role networks play in the hiring process.
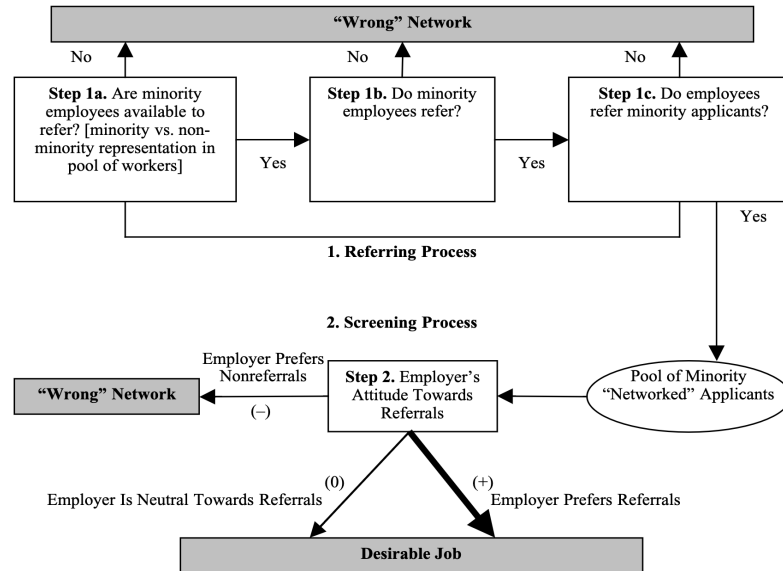
Source: "Networks, Race, and Hiring". *American Sociological ReviewVolume 71, Issue 1 2006.*

Networks either make or break the chance for employees and unfortunately race plays a big role in networking especially when job referrals lean toward homophilous race wise (Elliot 2001). Even when the minorities are able to cross the first few steps of the hiring process, there is no guarantee that the employer is neutral or biased towards referrals and if they are biased lean in a different direction. Their *wrong networks* only stretch so thin, therefore the matter is how to provide access to Latina women to form *good networks* that will be beneficial to them in the long run.

2.4 Latina Leadership in Action

Latina women leadership is seen rarely, but when it does make an appearance, it stands out. It is no easy feat to rise through the ranks to achieve leadership, therefore it is imperative to understand what motivates Latina women in the first place. The majority of Latino leaders are first or second generation, and heavily influenced by their

11

biculturalism, the combination of both their heritage but taken into consideration where they live (Cintron 2004). There is no denial of the obstacles the Latino community continues to deal with, but these women understand that their passion for it must turn into something viable such as entering the workforce. In other words, to create substantial change and enforce services that benefit their people, these mid-level and executive leaders are more likely to acculturate to satisfy the traditional white male standard (Setien 2004).

Scholars Garcia and Marquez (2001) explain that this is what occurs with Latina women who become involved in politics:

> [They] are able to transform traditional networks and resources based [sic] on family and culture into political assets and action…Latina political officeholders are able to overcome barriers of race, class, gender, and culture largely because they are able to draw from their experiences as long-time community activists… Latinas [can] alter their traditional [gender] roles and, at the same time, promote Chicano and Latino culture. (p. 112)

Furthermore, a study revealed that the majority of Latino leaders who enter into leadership roles did not want to follow the traditional gender roles of their mothers but instead branch out (Bonilla-Santiago 1992). Additionally, the distinctive factor that these Latino leaders attribute their leadership style to is Latino culture. Latino culture is rooted in spirituality and family, influencing how they lead the team they oversee specifically in worker relations and organizational culture. More importantly, studies have shown that strong family support and a firm ethnic identity in who they are, are indicators that have influenced Latino leaders (Gallegos 2006). Something also important to point out is that

Latina women leaders have made it through with the mentorship of either white men or other Hispanic women and that they themselves serve as mentors to other Latina women (Bonilla-Santiago 1992).

The biggest difference between Latino nonprofit business leaders and the traditional archetypes is an emphasis placed on paving the way for future leadership, authenticity, and giving back to the community among their team (Salas 2005). This is quite important because it demonstrates how these ladies do not want their prodigies to suffer the necessary and unjust barriers to reach the level of position they are in now. Becoming a leader should not be an uphill battle in the respect that there is blatant opposition to the growth of an individual because they appear different from the leaders of the past.

Methodology and Data

I utilized a mixed-methods research approach analyzing both primary and secondary data resources because it allowed for an integration of both quantitative and qualitative data for the study. The secondary resources were retrieved through research databases provided by Drew University. The primary qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews of 26 executives in the nonprofit sector in New Jersey. I specifically chose this method because while the numbers describe trends or distributors, unlike qualitative they cannot tell the why or how of the people and experiences behind statistics. The participants in this qualitative research were selected using purposive sampling. I first contacted twenty-six individuals via email. The majority of the individuals responded quickly thereafter agreeing to the interviews. Only a couple of follow ups had to be done. I chose to do semi-structured interviews for my research to

allow a sense of informality and ingenuity to shine through and not have interviewees feel as if they are being interrogated. Instead, my main goal was to have an open and sincere conversation regarding this topic without any judgment. Moreso, this format allows me to focus on subjects that could arise unexpectedly during the interview.

The demographic breakdown of the interviewees included ten Latina female executives, three Latino male executives, ten caucasian female executives, and three caucasian male executives. The focus of the organizations from which they were sampled ranged from affordable housing and healthcare to Latino political advocacy and economic development; similarly, the leadership positions represented in the sample include

● Executive Director

● Chief Executive Officer

● Chief Operating Officer

● Volunteer Program Manager

● President

● Vice President of Programs

The semi-structured interviews were conducted both through Zoom video conferencing as well as in person at the respective office of the interviewees following safe distance protocols. The format of how the interview took place was chosen at the discretion of the interviewee. The names of all the interviewees and organizations they work for will not be mentioned in this report to protect their privacy. Below I include a chart detailing the pseudonyms of organizations, type of service, role, gender, race and the number they are assigned. Additionally I list the interview questions to provide

context for the data. The next section describes the main themes gathered from the

interviews and chapter 5 discusses the findings and provides further analysis of the data.

Table #2: *Interviewee Demographics & Information*

Assigned number	Pseudonyms	Focus	Gender	Race	Role
Number 1	Ana	Latino politics	Female	Latino	Executive Director
Number 2	Gloria	Community driven	Female	Latino	Executive Vice President
Number 3	Maria	Mental Health	Female	Latino	CEO
Number 4	Stella	Civil Rights	Female	Latino	COO
Number 5	Victoria	Latino community	Female	Latino	Executive Director
Number 6	Ruth	Latino politics	Female	Latino	Executive Director
Number 7	Jessica	Immigrant focused	Female	Latino	Executive Director
Number 8	Adriana	Food	Female	Latino	CEO
Number 9	Rebecca	Community Service	Female	Latino	Volunteer Program Manger
Number 10	Jennifer	Latino community	Female	Latino	Executive Director
Number 11	Mark	Business development	Male	Latino	Executive Director
Number 12	Andres	Food	Male	Latino	Executive Director
Number 13	Caleb	Education	Male	Latino	Executive

					Director
Number 14	Ashley	Youth	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 15	Stephanie	Women empowerment	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 16	Gwen	Substance abuse	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 17	Emily	Affordable housing	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 18	Julia	Nonprofits	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 19	Cathy	Healthcare	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 20	Kimberly	Children Abuse	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 21	Karen	Family	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 22	Lauren	Housing	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 23	Sofia	Affordable Housing	Female	White	Executive Director
Number 24	Michael	Homelessness	Male	White	Executive Director
Number 25	Julian	Business development	Male	White	Executive Director
Number 26	Owen	Education	Male	White	Executive Director

1. How did you initially get started in the nonprofit sector?

2. Could you tell me about your recent career trajectory, last few jobs, and how you came to your current job?

3. In your past experiences, could you describe important mentorship, advice, and help you received that aided you in your career goals?

4. Stepping outside of your experiences, do you think there are barriers to the advancement of Latina women in the nonprofit sector?

5. What are the opportunities for the advancement of Latina people in the nonprofit sector, Latina women in particular.

6. A lot of scholarship has confirmed that Latina women are under-represented in leadership roles. What are some solutions to reverse this problematic trend?

The tables below highlights the themes identified during the twenty-six interviews based on the interview questions presented in the previous section of and corresponding quotes from interviewees:

Major Theme #1: White Recruitment	
Interviewee	**Specific Quotations**
#22: Lauren, female, white	"I think all of my jobs, I've been kind of pulled into, I never really went looking for them to be honest. Yeah, so then I got contacted about this position at HA through a recruiter and some people I knew had recommended me and it really was the culmination of everything that I had done in my career. It's truly everything, the work we do here is stuff I've experienced throughout all my other positions and it's my home community where I grew up and live, so it was like a dream come true to be able to come here."
#26: Owen,	"And because I look, I went to *X school.* And so when that phone

male, white	call came out to fill in the gap for *Y organization*. I was somebody who came to mind. I didn't apply for that. They called me. I did a good job when I stayed. but there were probably a lot of other people who could have had that call, or maybe a more equitable way of going around to solve that problem."
#25: Julian, male, white	"I heard that the County of Union had a county level economic development organization, another nonprofit. It was kind of small but growing, they just hired a new executive director who my father actually happened to know, and in a conversation they had he mentioned her like, hey, you know, my son happens to work for this other economic development organization. So long story short, I had an interview and I took the job in the beginning. It was just my boss, myself and a receptionist, and here I am, you know, 40 years later."
#18: Julia, female, white	"My involvement goes back to actually, when I was at Rutgers I was in the Eagleton program. They had an internship program, and the center was where I was assigned. So after that ended, we kept in touch over the next couple of years. They had a position open up, and they contacted me. So most of my nonprofit experience going way back is with the for center for nonprofits in various hats."
#21, Karen, female, white	"I actually sat on boards and did volunteer work. I actually sat on the board of this organization and then when the long-time CEO left, they asked me to sit in on an interim basis and then they ended up hiring me to be the CEO."
#24: Michael, male, white	"You know my being at *Y* is in part due to *X* because the *Y organization* was also founded in Summit. *X* was on the advisory board at *Y* and recommended to me one morning that I consider the opening because the executive director of 14 years. So it was like all roads seemed to be connected to summit NJ and *X person* my career thus far."

Table 1. Major Theme collected from interviews. Table created by the researcher.

Major Theme #2: Mentorship or Lack of it	
Interviewee	**Specific Quotations**
#1: Ana, female, latina	"Yes I did have mentorship, when I first started at a nonprofit. Directly under an executive director of a nonprofit so I saw how the day to day operations look like, the writing of grants, the piecing together of projects, the day to day business aspect of a nonprofit, I learned that from directly working under that person and shadowing

	them."
#12: Andres, male, latino	"The whole concept of mentorship and sponsors it's not very well defined in the private sector. I had people for sure that I learned from on subject matter absolutely. But in terms of a sponsor and a mentor that helped guide the career along. There was definitely an absence of that and something that does not exist and exists even less if you're a person of color, if you're a Latino or a first generation, like myself in this space, because well let's face it. There aren't a lot of leaders in our space that are at this level."
#8: Adriana, female, latina	"We're the generation that opened the doors for young women like you, and so there weren't a lot of mentors at the time. you know it, Female mentors. We were all struggling to get a seat at the table to break that glass ceiling, if you will. And so there weren't a lot of mentors at the time, and I know that that would have been probably beneficial. So there weren't a lot of mentors at the time. And I think that you know I could have benefited from that."
#15: Stephanie, female, white	"You know I didn't even know how to accept what a mentor was. I didn't even I didn't know. I honestly feel that all of my decisions were made on the basis of am I making a difference and would my mom be proud of me and those were the two and like I had and I think for because she died so young I think I had this thing you know do all these things to to get a career together and to make a difference before I died. I knew it probably wasn't the right decision for me and that's kind of what guided me but I wish I had a lot more guidance."
#5: Victoria, female, latina	"Absolutely, I have an amazing mentor. I've had several mentors throughout my career. All have been very good and all have helped me in various ways. The mentor that has kind of mentored me the longest is a woman. She always kept in touch with me. Anytime I had a question, she would help. She's been at every gala, every fundraiser I've hosted here. She supports us every year, we still have lunch regularly and my management style came 100% from her."
#2: Gloria, female, latina	"So I would say that I didn't have an actual mentor that worked in the nonprofit world that was like a mentor per se. I think there is a lack of mentorship for people who are in a nonprofit world and of color. Does that make any sense? You may find others, but not exactly in that."
#20: Kimberly, female, white	"I had some really great mentors and some doctors at St. Barnabas, and a professor at Nyu. When I was doing my doctorate, I had a phenomenal professor, and I think that's really what helped me,

	which is why I love to Mentor now, and I always take in turns Casa and I'll Mentor other nonprofit organizations, if they're starting."

Table 2. Major Theme collected from interviews. Table created by the researcher.

Major Theme #3: Diversification at different levels	
Interviewee	**Specific Quotations**
#4: Stella, female, latina	"And not just saying diversity is important, but actually believe it because you have staff turnover and if the board is not fully bought in. For a board in a nonprofit, they need to make it a priority because they make the funding decisions. They make the hiring decisions of the ED which is huge. You need to have leadership fully bought in, in a very profound way because if you're not, you're just barking at the walls because they're not going to really make the changes necessary but they're not paid and they will leave the board, or you're going to have to change the way you do things. It's hard for people, that kind of change for people is really hard."
#15: Stephanie, female, white	"If you make a commitment as a non-profit to have your board reflective of a diverse community you're going to have your staff reflective and then those opportunities will be there but you have to first make that commitment and I think so many say that they're going to do it and they don't that that's what's keeping people out of the opportunity I don't think that it's an intentional you know we're not going to let any latino move up or move in I think it's just saying we have to change our own demographic and we have to change the board from the top down and it takes a commitment."
#12: Andres, male, latino	"We had to start with just introducing basic governance structures that allow for diversity and inclusion, which means you have to promote turnover in and term limits through turnover. and then you have to go through the exercise of hey? Is this an inviting space? And then how do you? How does one invite? How does one recruit? How does one identify for true diversity? there's a lot of different factors that come into place when you do such a big change to big change management at the board level to bring in diversity, and then it's a whole other process to be inclusive."

Table 3. Major Theme collected from interviews. Table created by the researcher.

Findings

The main goal of these interviews was to learn about the career trajectories of the executives and explore what had a positive or negative impact during the journey to an executive position. In order to properly understand the themes that came out of the interviews, I transcribed all them on google documents. This took an average of two to three hours to ensure that the interviews were correctly transcribed. After transcribing the interviews I coded them by three separate themes based on repetition of words that interviewees mentioned.

The first theme I found was white recruitment. I came to this conclusion because I observed a critical pattern among the white participants both male and female. At least half of the white interviewees expressed that they had been either contacted or recruited for the positions held throughout their respective careers. On the other hand, more than half of Latina and Latino interviewees made little to no mention of recruitment as a form to being hired. The second theme I concluded was the role of mentorship. Many of the Latino/a interviewees expressed not having a formal mentorship, but instead having to lean on themselves for guidance throughout their career. However the few Latino and white interviewees who had mentors, asserted that their mentor played a pivotal role in their career advancement. Finally, the last major theme I discovered was the need for diversification at different levels. There was an awareness that interviewees expressed that within the nonprofit sector of the underrepresentation of Latina individuals in executive positions in part due to the differences between social capital and mentorship. Part of the problem that interviewees expressed is that diversity has not been intentional from the top. Therefore, organizations will continue to recruit primarily whites.

These themes I found are quite revealing but most importantly they are all intertwined with one another. The specifics of the intersectionality of the themes is discussed in the next chapter.

Discussion

5.1 White Recruitment

The first thing that came to mind was possible differences in social capital among white and nonwhite interviewees. In this scenario I refer to social capital as the networks and connections among people that originate from a place of trust and a promise to exchange wealth of information that benefits social causes they are working towards (Putnam 2000). That being said, the nonprofit sector is no better example of social capital in action. Because organizations have rooted relationships with agencies, community partners, and/or local government, they are able to secure resources that allow for improved "organizational performance" (Brown et al 2016). Moreover, social capital is also important in this sector because connections with the right person(s) could potentially open a new door of opportunity for individuals looking to grow professionally.

Social capital however is not immune to homophily. In fact research continues to support that social capital or networks "tend to be homogeneously sorted" (McPherson et al 2001). It is human nature to associate ourselves with individuals that we deem are similar to us because it is comfortable territory. It can be uncomfortable for people to socialize with others they sharezero commonalities with. Which is why homophily by class, intellect, age, gender, and race exists.

After reviewing the interviews, I speculate white participants may have had an upperhand in social capital due to homophily of race. I observed that the connections they held lead them to a higher position as their career trajectory was in a position of expansion. These connections were adjacent white professionals who contacted them. The social capital of the interviewees has served them well. However, it does not go to say that the Latino interviewees do not have their own social capital. I argue though that the depth of their social capital is not the same when weighed against their white counterparts. Specifically, having a white male professional connection versus a Latina female one is not interchangeable.

I apply now the logic of homophily by race towards the Latino interviewees social capital; it brings me to an intuitive conclusion. The social capital made up of these Latino individuals possibly consist of a higher number of Latino professionals versus other races. There is no doubt that within the Latino population there is a wealth of knowledge and resources they are willing to share. Unfortunately, this does not translate perfectly in the nonprofit world specifically while Latino people are working in the sector, it is rare they hold positions of influence and power. This is crucial because I speculate that many of these individuals hold crucial positions within their organizations. However, while they may be able to recommend an individual from their social network for an open position, potentially their recommendation is secondary to the senior executive who already has someone in mind.

I do not mean to say that the white interviewees are not qualified for their position of leadership they hold today nor that they did not put in their hours for it. What I mean to say because of the inclination of a recruiter is to unconsciously lean towards someone

similar unintentionally eliminates the opportunity of equally qualified candidates from the chance to apply. All these findings are consistent with the theory of homophily that "tendency of people to interact with similar people, is a widespread phenomenon that has important economic consequences" (Patacchini and Zenou 2012). It further supports that homophily has a negative effect even in this sector and has evolved from the *old boys club* into what I speculate the *mean girls club*.

5.2 Mentorship or Lack of It

This plays to the next major theme: mentorship or the lack of it. Mentorship goes hand in hand with social capital. A formal definition of mentorship is a professional relationship where someone with expertise in a specific field (the mentor) advises and counsels someone (the mentee) in that particular area (Kram 1985). Mentorship is quite valuable because individuals are allowed to ask for advice and guidance in areas that perhaps they are not well-versed in. Moreso, it allows for connections to be made and expands the social capital of that person. However, because mentorship is associated with social capital, the Latina/o interviewees suffer to have little to no mentorship because of the racial differences. It proves to be difficult for them to seek out mentors who like them in positions of leadership. Human preference is to gravitate towards individuals who identify the same as ourselves, especially in the work environment, because while journeys may not be entirely same, the obstacles are similarly difficult (Gisombe and Mattis 2002). The chance to have a relationship with a mentor who comes from a similar background creates a strong professional bond that Latinos are seeking to find.

Unfortunately, that is not usually the case. A survey yielded surprising results that while Latina women value mentorship highly, they are reduced to seeking mentorship

outside because the likelihood of receiving internal mentoring is low compared to white men (Biu 2019). The attribution to this as previously mentioned because there is an apparent absence of Latina female leaders within these organizations. Even so, racial differences should never be a limitation when it comes to mentor relationships in the workplace. Race is not an indication that a mentor relationship will not function properly. An open minded entry-level associate working in an organization who wants to advance the hierarchical ladder will be proactive and seek out mentorship from willing top executives regardless of race or gender.

For example, a white male executive with twenty years of experience who mentors a Latina female associate who is an open-minded learner can be exactly what the mentee needs. The possibility of difference between the race of mentor and mentee should not be viewed as a disadvantage but an advantage. The experiences between a white male employee versus a Latina female will clearly be different, however the wealth of knowledge and expertise he could share is infinite.

There is such rich value in cross identity mentoring relationships because both parties can learn from each other. There is no animosity between the two or a malicious intent to hurt the mentee's prospects of advancement. This is why mentorship is so important for Latina women because it serves as a testament that they are not alone. Someone believes in their work and the leadership potential within them to guide them along the long winding path towards that goal. The journey can be done alone because Latina women are strong and resilient, but with a mentor by their side the journey to the finish line can be that much smoother.

5.3 Diversification at Different levels

Intentionality here is key because it is meaningless if top executives do not want to diversify their employee pool then it will not happen. On that account, these organizations need to focus on diversification in the hiring process as well but more importantly diversity among the board of directors. While there is self-awareness within the sector for diversification within its leadership, it is easier said than done when boards are mainly homogeneously ordered. Zippia, a career expert company, found that the most common ethnicity of a board of directors member is white at 76.1%, and only 7.9% Latino members (2021). The board of directors sets the tone of employment demography because all employees who are hired through an organization must all be approved through them.

Hire processes are enforced through a set of strict equal opportunity guidelines allowing for any individual to apply for positions in an organization. This step is crucial as it ensures that everyone is given the chance to send in their profile. Regardless, when social capital steps into the picture, unconscious bias begins to operate and I place an emphasis on unconscious bias. I do not mean to say that these board members are overtly racist and prefer the white candidates over any minority candidates; that is simply not true. It does not mean that the hiring manager found for example the Latina candidate unqualified. What I intend to say is that, unconsciously, the preference to hire homogeneously is strong.

5.4 Recommendations

I recommend that wide systematic changes be brought to light and implemented in the nonprofit sector through the enforcement of both internal and external policies. that

Latina women have a valuable voice of opinion in the works of this sector. Specifically organizations must be intent with the creation but more importantly, the impartial enforcement of anti-discrimination policies and laws within them. The U.S. does in fact have an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission whose main purpose is to "enforcing federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age". There needs to be advocacy towards the EEOC investigating cases of discrimination to bring to light these injustices that happen under their noses whether willingly or unwillingly.

One very important change that must be done at the organizational level is the addressing of internal bias. This cannot be done by the own employees but instead by an impartial evaluation committee that is versed in the development of biases both unconscious and conscious and how to undo them. By first acknowledging that bias is present in an organization, it allows employers and employees to be transparent and have honest discussions as to how these biases harm specific employees. This mixes into paying Latina women of color fairly in accordance with the white man. Organizations need to take responsibility for their pay scales and establish transparency regarding them to make sure that all employees from different backgrounds but similar credentials will be rightly compensated (Biu 2019).

The rise of Latina women's leadership is an effort that cannot be accomplished solely through the strength of the women themselves but instead through a cache of resources and opportunities to open doors. The first help that truly advocates for Latina women's growth is mentorship. Perhaps the most important is the establishment of

meaningful mentorship partnerships. Having personally experienced what it is to work alongside a mentor who is in tune with my professional goals and equipping me with the tools and resources to get there, I have to always advocate for mentorship. No monetary value can be placed on the importance of a mentor that is wholeheartedly concerned with the wellbeing of their mentee. Organizations should form race or gender-based affinity groups where coworkers "encourage, support, and advocate for the inclusion and advancement of the constituency they represent" (Biu 2019). This does not mean that peer support fully replaces mentorship but be seen as a necessary supplement on top of what mentorship provides. Mentorship provides a path and legacy for mentees to then become themselves in the future mentors to future generations. Unfortunately, women of color attest that they are the least likely to receive peer support through "peer support group meetings" when they are the ones who truly yearn the most (Biu 2019). The presence of a mentor can truly make a difference because unfortunately, the majority of women cannot even imagine themselves in management (Gibelman 1998). A mentor represents a role model figure who is genuinely concerned with the growth and development of their mentee in the professional setting. However, these internships should be properly formed and not done to check a box that an organization is providing mentorship to its minority employees. Instead, mentorship should be formed based on the needs of the mentee and the skilled expertise of the mentor.

Another important aspect is for Latina female employees to view one another not as competition but instead as teammates. This switch in focus allows employees to not be apathetic to each other and instead work together to tear down discriminatory barriers.

This doesn't happen overnight but must be intentionally structured and supported for example sponsorship for women of color peer support groups (Biu 2019).

Peer support provides honest discussion on how employees can assist one another in the workplace that tries to undermine them as anything but assets. Just as important is that Latino coworkers understand that their experience is contained to just them but that others like them are in the same boat. The knowledge that someone is going through a similar situation provides a sense of comfort that an outside empathizing individual could never truly comprehend which demonstrates the importance of peer support groups.

An important opportunity that allows for the advancement of Latina women in leadership is when organizations provide unbiased and impartial feedback to employees as well as leadership training. Studies reveal that when organizations implement *intentional* career development initiatives including training programs for prospective employees, it can boost the cultivation and evolution of an employee's career trajectory (Watson and Hassett 2004). Moreso, higher management should have their eye and evaluate employees' performance to detect who shows potential for leadership but also those who are proactive and show interest themselves. In doing this, management is then able to target leadership and management programs so that these employees are given the chance to develop the necessary skills (Kolb 1999). These types of programs provide learning opportunities for growth and mastering of necessary skills to become a well-functioning leader. Moreso, it could provide validation for Latino leaders who are without a shadow of a doubt seen as the underdog, the boost of encouragement that leadership is where they are meant to be. Other studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between both leadership experience and leader emergence (Kolb 1997). In

other words, prospective employees who show interest in leadership go further when they are equipped with the tools to grow into their full potential as a leader. Training programs should never be underestimated or overlooked especially when they are well implemented.

5.5 Limitations & Future Research

Because there are limitations of this specific study primarily that it focuses on Latina female leadership but most importantly only accounts for nonprofit leadership in New Jersey. Future research should focus on comparing women of color in leadership positions in the nonprofit sector in surrounding states and different geographic regions in the country because the environment could play a huge factor. Additionally a second group could be the focus of other studies of middle-management or lower-management positions held by women of color as a point of comparison. Furthermore, the sample size for further research should be increased to gain a larger understanding of the matter and these new participants could be from the same organizations as the executive leaders and determine what upward mobility looks like per organization. More importantly, I think it's important that research be done concerning the experience of brown and afro-Latinas versus their light-skinned and white-passing Latinas counterparts and how it impacts their career trajectory.

5.6 Conclusion

My ultimate professional goal is to work in the nonprofit sector, but to one day serve as an organization's executive director. Not everyone is called to be a leader or has the innate passion to lead people. However, I understand that my future is that because I have seen the impact Latina women's leadership has had in my life and how it influences

me to push forward despite opposition. Seeing Latina women in leadership such as CEOS of grassroots organizations serving marginalized communities such as the one I grew up in motivates me that despite all oppositions, giving back is the greatest reward. It provides me with such relief that I can one day be in a position of power and influence where I can make a difference and create opportunities for aspiring young girls that leadership is in the cards. As Latina women, we bring ambiguity and such rich cultural background that makes our leadership styles unique to others. It does not go without saying that Latina women have not made progress in obtaining leadership positions, but the work is not done. As our population continues to grow, we must continue to make noise and advocate for our representation in leadership.

Our minority status does not equal us not having a seat at the table. The needs of the Latino community are just as important as all other groups are. Systematic change can be done when more Latina women are in high positions, speaking the voice and opinion of our beloved people. This uphill battle is far from over, and I will continue to advocate for the nonprofit sector to not view Latina women or any women of color as a threat to their antique white-patriarchal mindset that it was built on but instead as a valuable team player in combating inequalities of all shapes and sizes.

Discrimination and prejudice have no place in the workplace, especially in the nonprofit sector. This sector is built on the ideology of serving others who are in need regardless of their background of any sort, so for it to not act on what it preaches is hypocritical. I fell in love with the nonprofit sector because I see how people from all walks of life come together to work against injustice, therefore organizations must reflect this belief not just outwards but inwards. I have faith the nonprofit sector will reach a

point where it is not afraid of diversity representation in its leadership. I believe that I

will be part of a new wave that will bring forth diversity and equity to this sector.

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