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Fernanda Ibanez
DePaul University, fibanez@depaul.edu

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Latinas in Leadership Positions in the United States: Theories, Characteristics, and Recommendations

A Thesis
Presented in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science

By
Fernanda Ibanez
June 6th, 2023

Department of Psychology
College of Science and Health
DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois

Thesis Committee

Alice Stuhlmacher, Ph.D., Chair

Jane Halpert, Ph.D.

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Biography

The author was born in Chicago, Illinois, on April 14th, 2000. Fernanda graduated from Romeoville High School, in Romeoville, Illinois, in 2018. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a concentration in Industrial-Organizational Psychology from DePaul University in 2022.

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Abstract

In the United States, Latinas are one of the fastest growing populations in the workforce today. Despite increased presence in the labor market, it has not resulted in significant increases in the representation of Latinas in top and middle level leadership positions. This thesis details the current state of Latinas as leaders, as well as the theoretical background pertaining to leadership styles and challenges that Latinas face. Finally, the thesis aims to serve as a resource for Latinas currently occupying a leadership role, or looking to occupy one in the future, by offering recommendations of characteristics and behaviors that relate to leader effectiveness.

Keywords: *Latinas, leadership, development, characteristics*

Introduction

The workforce today continues to rapidly evolve and hence requires leaders that can effectively adapt to new trends as they unfold. This is because the role that leaders play in organizations is a crucial one given leaders more than often play a vital role in determining whether an organization succeeds or fails (Bass, & Bass, 1998; Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). When determining what makes a successful leader, different factors are going to influence the level of effectiveness. Factors such as demographic characteristics, cultural differences, personalities, and specific challenges influence how the individual functions and develops as a leader.

Based on these observations, the following review overviews the current state of Latinas in leadership in the United States while also aiming to serve as a tool for current and future Latina leaders. Theories, characteristics, and recommendations that pertain to Latinas will be outlined throughout the paper. For this paper, when referring to Latinas in leadership, it will be referring to Latinas in middle-level and top-level executive leadership positions in organizations in the United States. Additionally, given the limited amount of research on such demographic as leaders, the literature surrounding Latinos and women of color will be used as supporting information in the subsequent sections of the review. Lastly, Hispanic refers to people who speak Spanish or descend from Spanish speaking populations while Latin(a) are those who are from or descend from Latin America. To widen the scope of the population that could be included within the overview, Latin(a) and Hispanic were used interchangeably.

Despite the crucial need for leaders outlined above, women continue to be one of the demographic groups that struggle to achieve equal representation in leadership roles

(Appelbaum et al., 2003). Women’s labor force participation rate was at 56.2% in 2020, which puts into perspective the presence they have in the workforce today (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Despite these statistics and women entering the workforce at a faster rate in the last quarter century, the percentage of leadership positions held by women continues to remain low (Ely et al., 2011). Often women candidates possess traits and characteristics that make them attractive candidates for leadership positions in organizations but will be overlooked (Appelbaum et al., 2003). This underrepresentation is explained by metaphors such as the labyrinth which communicates the idea that women have to maneuver through many visible and invisible barriers which hinder them from reaching and occupying leadership roles (Carli & Eagly, 2016). Despite challenges and the percentage of women in leadership remaining low, it is important to note that there has also been some movement toward closing this gap. For example, in January 2023, for the first time in Fortune 500’s history, women held more than ten percent of leadership roles in Fortune 500 companies (Hinchliffe, 2023).

Of interest for this thesis is that Latinas have one of the lowest percentages of representation in leadership roles. Today, Latinas make up 1.7% in chief executive positions and 4.4% of managerial positions (DiMaria, 2023). Some explanations as to why their journey as leaders is more challenging is due to the fact that they are a “double minority” given they identify as women and as an ethnic minority. In addition, Latinas also face challenges due to their cultural background in striving to prove themselves as valuable assets to leadership teams and organizations (Holvino, 2008).

Although Latinos have one of the fastest growing segments in the United States workforce (Holvino, 2008), Latina leader representation is not well understood. Latinas can bring a unique cultural perspective, work ethic, and viewpoints regarding leadership styles to organizations. For organizations to excel they must effectively support all human resources (Appelbaum et al., 2003). This means being able to understand the challenges women of color face in order to create a space where they feel they can thrive despite their differences.

Background of Women of Color in Leadership

Historically, women of color have been underrepresented in leadership roles. In 2020, the civilian noninstitutional labor force participation for women was 134,407,000 of those 53,758,000 were women of color (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). This number accounts for women that identify as Black, Hispanic, and Asian. Looking at C-Suite leadership positions, 24% of women held these positions, of which 4% were women of color in 2021 (Catalyst, 2023). The percentage slightly increases when looking at leadership roles that are lower than C-Suite. For example, when looking at managerial positions, 41% of women occupied these roles but only 12% of those women were women of color (Catalyst, 2023). These percentages put into perspective that as a whole women of color suffer from underrepresentation in leadership roles in the United States. Despite efforts from policies to close this gap, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin, the gap in leadership roles continues to exist.

A reason as to why the gap continues to exist is rooted in the organizational hierarchies that have been in place for centuries. Historically, men and more specifically white men, have been the gender and race that tend to dominate leadership roles and organizational hierarchies (Ely et al., 2011). Men and women are typically associated with possessing different traits and/or characteristics (Eagly & Karua, 2002). The “ideal” leader traits tend to be more closely aligned with traits that are assigned to men. With such deeply rooted stereotypes of what the ideal leader should look and act like, it makes it hard for women of color to occupy leadership roles, because they don’t seem to “fit” the role.

Ferdman (1999) noted that despite an abundance of research on leadership, a gap exists in accounting for how gender and race affect how one may behave as a leader. Therefore, before considering Latinas in leadership roles, their place in the context of the history of women of color in leadership must be considered. A handful of the challenges that Latinas face are not necessarily exclusive to this ethnic group but rather stem from the fact that they pertain to a bigger group that identifies as women of color. Challenges have stemmed from the misconceptions that exist around what it means to be a woman of color. For example, women of color are known to communicate in an assertive and straightforward manner, which is misconstrued as confrontational (Beckett, 2020). They often are also held to higher standards as a means to prove themselves to their perspective teams and organizations (Hollis, 2018). However, as they strive to improve as leaders, microaggressions and hostilities from their peers put forth additional challenges and stressors (Hollis, 2018). Such behaviors from their peers can result in experiencing emotional tax which reduces productivity and engagement in the workplace (Beckett, 2020).

Glass Ceiling

One challenge that women face is described with a metaphor known as the glass ceiling. This metaphor represents the idea that an invisible barrier is created that hinders women from moving up in the corporate world, hence reaching a leadership position (Morrison et al., 1987). Women may be able to move through various ranks in an organization, eventually however in their development they encounter an invisible barrier that puts them at a halt in their career. This differs from the journey of men which has been referred to as riding the glass escalator signifying, they are capable of achieving the same leadership positions faster (Beckett, 2020). The glass ceiling illustrates that leadership positions for women of color are within their reach but because of the ceiling they cannot reach the positions, but they can see them and see that such positions exist.

Weyer (2007) conducted extensive research on the glass ceiling and concluded that the glass ceiling is a creation of three different factors. The first factor is a biological explanation, in which it accounts for biological differences between men and women that result in different psychological dispositions. Today however, biological models, such as the one presented above, are not typically employed when accounting for leadership differences amongst genders (Weyer, 2007). Instead, the two other factors, socialization, and cultural explanations, receive more attention (Weyer, 2007). Socialization explanations argue that differences are not due to one's gender but rather are acquired as one develops through their different life stages. The last factor accounts for cultural explanations and states that one's differences stem from their cultural differences. Such explanation of the glass ceiling helps put into perspective how many different factors contribute to the barriers that women of color have to surpass in order to be able to reach leadership roles. Although in more recent decades women have proved to be able to break through the glass ceiling, there are still women that continue to be at a standstill because of the glass ceiling.

Concrete Ceiling

A similar metaphor has been created to account for the race specific hardships that women of color face in the workforce. The concrete ceiling explains how race, gender, and class come together to further put women of color at a disadvantage when pursuing leadership positions (Rivera, 2010). In other words, the concrete ceiling aims to place a greater emphasis on the racism that women of color endure in the workforce. The word concrete has been assigned to this metaphor because such word puts into perspective how hard, rough, and unnavigable attaining a leadership position can be, much like concrete (Beckett, 2020). In comparison to the glass ceiling, a concrete ceiling is a harsher dead end for the development of women of color as leaders. Women of color face more stereotypes, biases, and double standards in comparison to other groups (Rivera, 2010). Despite the efforts to implement policies and diversity programs within organizations to facilitate the path to leadership for women of color, microaggressions and discrimination continue to incapacitate their progress as leaders in the workforce (Beckett, 2020).

Latinas in Leadership

Despite the increased presence of Latinas in the workforce, a big discrepancy still exists in their employment statistics. In 2020, the civilian noninstitutional labor force participation for women was 134,407,000 of those only 22,201,000 were Hispanic women, meaning Hispanic women only made up about 8.5% of the total civilian noninstitutional working population (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). The percentage of Latina presence is lower in leadership positions. Despite Latinas exercising informal leadership roles in their families for many years, the presence in formal leadership roles in the United States have been fairly low. In 2021, Latina women held 4.3% of leadership positions, in comparison to a share of 32.6% held by white women (Catalyst, 2023; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).

The research thus far has revealed that societal and cultural aspects have contributed to Latinas' experience when approaching leadership roles. However, research has also revealed that there are many qualities that Latinas possess that should make them competitive contenders in these roles. In the following sections, those qualities are further explained as well as challenges that they face. When analyzing the relationship between Latinas and leadership roles in the United States it is equally important to look at both the positive and negative aspects of the relationship. On one hand, the positive aspects reveal progress is being made and that the established information can be used as a resource to continue the development of Latinas as leaders. On the other hand, by pointing out what challenges or negative aspects are contributing to their incapacity to reach leadership roles, organizations can take educated steps toward implementing effective changes that make these roles more accessible.

Leadership Styles

Based on the life experiences and cultural differences that are more prominent in Latinas, they are potentially more inclined to adopt certain leadership styles. Research has shown that transformational and servant leadership styles are likely to be adopted more often than other leadership styles by Latinas (Bonilla Rodriguez, 2011; Rivera, 2014). Transformational leaders focus on their follower's needs and abilities in hopes to develop them (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). Transformational leaders are seen as a resource in building follower commitment to the organization. Bass (1985), identifies four components in transformational leadership, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Idealized influence means leaders are seen as role models that their followers want to emulate. When leaders exert inspirational motivation, it means they inspire people from their teams by emphasizing the idea that everyone's work plays a role in achieving overall team goals (Bass, 1985). To be viewed as a resource, leaders engage in individualized consideration with their followers, meaning they create meaningful relationships with their followers in which they establish that they can be a reliable and trustworthy resource. Finally, transformational leaders challenge their followers by provoking intellectual stimulation.

For Latinas, these four components are qualities that may come naturally given Hispanic culture stresses *personalismo,* the act of forming personal and trusting relationships (Holvino, 2008). Furthermore, values that are prominent under a transformational leadership style closely align with values in a collectivist culture, the cultural view that many Latinas identify with. A collectivist culture teaches that group needs come before individual needs and that one's purpose in the group is to fit into the group's needs (Markus, & Kitayama, 1991). Latinas may look to satisfy their family or group needs before they even attempt to take care of their own needs. This often leads to stepping into informal leadership roles within their families before taking on a formal leadership role at an organization.

Servant leadership is also something aligned with Latinas. Greenleaf's (1997) model of servant leadership style conceptualizes servant leaders as leaders who put other people's (their follower's) needs before their own. This leadership style is often adopted by Latinas because of the cultural significance it has for them (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). Characteristics of servant leadership include listening, healing, empathy, and stewardship (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). All of these characteristics tend to be familiar to Latinas before they step into a formal leadership role because their upbringing has emphasized the importance of displaying these characteristics in their personality at an early age (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). Examples of this include cultural scripts such as *simpatia* and *familismo. Simpatia* is a characteristic that emphasizes the idea that as Latinas they must promote positive relations by avoiding conflict (Holvino, 2008). Latinas will make the effort to listen to everyone's needs and sympathize with them. They will engage in actions, such as attentive listening, that will let their followers or people under their care know that they care for their success and well-being. The idea of having a close and protective relationship with family or friends known as *familismo* is another cultural script that Latinas are taught (Holvino, 2008). In servant leadership, leaders will develop a protective state over their followers given they are inclined to put their follower's needs over their own.

Leading under a specific leadership style is crucial to the development of a leader's identity, given the leadership style is going to play in role in dictating how they lead their followers. Organizations may also look for a leader that leads under a specific leadership style. If Latinas are aware of what leadership styles are most successful based on their cultural differences, they can promote themselves in a more educated manner.

Challenges Latinas Leaders Face

Although positive results can stem from a Latinas culture and upbringing, those same factors hinder the development of Latinas in leadership roles. The information detailed above illuminated that challenges for Latinas in leadership stem from both being women of color and their gender. However, there also exist challenges that stem from specific cultural differences that can be attributed to being Latinas.

Familismo is one of the factors from a Latinas culture that can have both a positive and negative effect on their development as leaders. The importance of familial obligations is stressed to Latinas at an early age. Whether that is looking after their elders, attending to their community, or helping close friends, the idea that one has to help and support your close friends and relatives is emphasized throughout a Latina's upbringing. Such dedication to family obligations, however, can result in increases in stress (Bonilla- Rodriguez, 2011). When Latinas feel the constant need to support their family and please them, it can be overwhelming. Especially because in addition, to the needs they may face from their family, they now also have the additional responsibility of being responsible for a group at work. De Valencia (2008) interviewed Latina leaders in which she found that some Latinas were hesitant to take on a leadership role because it would interfere with their role expectations related to their families. The extent to which Latinas feel they are responsible for the wellbeing of their families is not only going to influence their decision of taking on a leadership role but rather also negatively impact how they view themselves as leaders if they do take on such a role.

More specifically, there are deeply rooted stereotypes within Hispanic culture that introduce additional challenges when pursuing a leadership career. For years, *machismo* has been prominent in Hispanic culture. *Machismo* is a term regarding gender relations in Hispanic culture. The term illustrates the idea that males are the dominant gender in this demographic group (Holvino, 2008; Mendez-Morse, 2000). This means that in Latino culture men are assigned the responsibility of providing for their family, meaning more than often, male Latinos are the ones that are inclined to take on leadership roles and achieve more success in the workplace. On the other hand, because of this stereotype, women in this culture are going to be conditioned to believe that their responsibility is to nurture and serve their families. A lot of times when Latinas have kids, it is an expectation in Latin culture that they will stop working in order to look after the children while the men must continue to work to provide for their families. As Latinas take on leadership roles their work/life balance can be negatively impacted due to the increase in work/family conflict (Bonilla Rodriguez, 2011) that can stem from *machismo.*

Latinas also face many internal barriers that contribute to their development as leaders. Latinas have reported that in addition to challenges that present themselves from cultural and family obligations, there is also a handful of internal barriers that are prevalent (Bonilla-Santiago,1992; Bonilla Rodriguez, 2011; Rivera, 2014). As Latinas step into roles of leadership, self-confidence is going to play a big role in their achievements as leaders. Due to the underrepresentation and lack of mentorship for Latinas, they often identify with the feeling of being unprepared or risk adverse (Rivera, 2014). Not having someone to guide them on their journey could lead to feelings of loss and loneliness in the corporate world. The constant need to have to prove themselves as capable often means they also feel they can’t ask for help or make mistakes because this would leave them at a disadvantage within their teams.

Theoretical Rationale

The journey that Latinas face as leaders demonstrates that the journey they have and challenges they encounter are created as a result of underlying issues. Some of these underlying issues can be explained by different theories. The following section highlights what those theories are and how they contribute to the understanding of Latinas in leadership.

Social Role Theory

Social role theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), states that the roles one fulfills or contributes to in society are influenced by one's gender. In other words, men and women are assigned different roles, the allocation of such roles however is determined by one's gender. In a family setting, this means that women would be predisposed to tend to their spouse, kids, and home duties. Cultural scripts in Hispanic culture heavily reinforce these assumed gendered roles, contributing to both internal and external barriers Latina's experience.

In an organizational setting social role theory is also relevant given roles within organizations may be assigned based on the assumption that a particular gender would be better at fulfilling the tasks in the role due to their gender. For example, men may be assigned to roles in which it is believed you have to behave in a more authoritative manner in order to "get things done". While women may be assigned to roles in which their nurturing attributes are seen as more essential and effective. All in all, this theory is useful when assessing Latinas in leadership roles because it demonstrates that multiple of their challenges stem from the fact that because they are women, it is believed they have predetermined roles in society that they have to adhere to (Weyer, 2007).

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory, although similar to social role theory, accounts for different factors that are relevant to Latinas. Critical race theory tends to emphasize the idea that the role one has in society is given to them because of their race (Rivera, 2010). A core aspect of this theory accounts for the idea that racism is not aberrational (Davis et al., 2015). For minorities, in this case Latinas, racial discrimination in the workplace continues to be prevalent. Challenges that Latinas face have stemmed from stereotypes that are placed on them due to their ethnicity and culture. When leaders step into a formal leadership role, leader status is not always granted if followers don't view one as a leader and grant that status; this lack of acceptance has been found to be more prevalent in women and racial minorities (Yip et al., 2020). For Latinas this may be especially difficult given they may feel the need to prove themselves as leaders while at the same time having to disprove any stereotypes that may be surrounding them based on their race. Additionally, they also have to be weary of making mistakes, so that they are not further discredited as leaders.

Self-Efficacy

As discussed above, a challenge for Latinas stems from having and displaying confidence. Part of this challenge relates to self-efficacy. Sitzmann and Yeo (2013) define self-efficacy as the beliefs one has regarding one's capability to organize actions in order to successfully attain the desired level of performance. Given this definition, it is evident that self-efficacy plays a role in organizational settings. Self-efficacy theory states that self-efficacy enhances work performance (Bandura, 1977). It is assumed that individuals who display higher levels of self-efficacy will perform better than others. These individuals will typically challenge themselves more by setting difficult goals, increasing the amount of effort they put forth to reach those goals, and engaging in levels of heightened persistence to try and attain the desired goals (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013).

In a study by Rivera (2010) Latina leaders were asked how they develop their self-efficacy. Most reported they adopt a mindset in which they recognize "they have an equal chance to accomplish anything they set their mind to" (Rivera, 2010, p. 47). Latinas recognize they must have faith in themselves and recognize that they are as smart and qualified. Overall, for Latinas to develop high self-efficacy, they must have positive influences and experiences (Montas-Hunter, 2012). A high self-efficacy plays a role in how Latinas think of themselves as leaders and decide what behaviors or risks they should engage in.

What are the Characteristics of Effective Latina Leaders?

The sections above highlight the history, current state, and trends of Latinas in leadership in the United States. In addition, it is important to present information that can be used as a resource for effective Latina leadership development. One of the factors that can be used to Latina's advantage lies within the characteristics they embrace and exhibit as leaders.

In leadership, the characteristics possessed by a leader play a role in shaping the individual as a leader and determining the degree of leadership effectiveness displayed (Gini & Green, 2014). As a leader, the characteristics that one embraces dictate how one operates or presents themselves to subordinates (Gilley et al., 2008). The characteristics that one adopts stem from factors relating to significant experiences, circumstances, places, and challenges (Gini & Green, 2014). For Latinas, this means that the theories, challenges, and cultural differences detailed above are all going to play a role in the characteristics they adopt as leaders.

Research on Latinas in leadership and their characteristics has tried to narrow down the characteristics that are crucial to Latina leaders. However, in many of these studies, respondents have expressed that as a result of the increased number of barriers that they face as leaders they view *all* the characteristics listed in surveys as very important (Bonilla-Santiago,1992; Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; De Valencia, 2008; Rivera, 2014). To be effective leaders, some Latinas believe that they must actively work harder to overcome the internal and external obstacles they face (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; Gomez et al., 2001). Latina leaders report that only by actively making the effort to embody and exert all the desired characteristics of what is deemed an effective leader, can they demonstrate that they are capable and qualified to occupy leadership roles (Rivera, 2014).

Research on characteristics in relation to effective Latina leaders has also aimed to determine whether the characteristics possessed by Latinas vary by sector. It has been found that the characteristics in fact do not vary in importance despite the difference in sectors. Results from studies done on the business, management, hospitality, and education sectors have all produced the same characteristics (Bonilla-Santiago,1992; Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; De Valencia, 2008; Rivera, 2014; Rivera, 2010). This suggests that the characteristics presented below can be utilized by Latinas looking to occupy or are currently occupying a leadership role in any sector.

Altogether there has not been an extensive amount of research on the characteristics of effective Latina leaders. The studies that have been conducted have resulted in the creation of lists that present a handful of characteristics that should be prioritized to display effective leadership behaviors as a Latina leader. Within these studies, a reoccurring trend of the same four characteristics: visionary, optimism, high integrity, and compassion, have been emphasized in the findings (Table 1) (Bonilla-Santiago,1992; Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; De Valencia, 2008; Gomez et al., 2011; Rivera, 2014).

Table 1: Characteristics of Effective Latina Leaders

Characteristic	**Description**
Visionary[1]	Someone who is creative and passionate
Optimistic[2]	The inclination to anticipate the best possible outcome by remaining hopeful/positive
High Integrity[3]	How honest and/or ethical one is
Compassion[4]	Caring for others, showing empathy
Note. [1] Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; Bonilla-Santiago, 1992; Rivera, 2014, [2] Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; De Valencia, 2008, [3] De Valencia, 2008; Rivera, 2014, [4] Bonilla-Santiago, 1992; De Valencia, 2008	

The four characteristics listed above have consistently shown up in all studies aimed at identifying the characteristics that make an effective Latina leader. Researchers have used both surveys and interviews to narrow down these characteristics (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; De Valencia, 2008; Bonilla-Santiago, 1992; Rivera, 2014). Typically, researchers will first send a survey to participants and follow up with an interview, if possible. In the interviews, Latina leaders are asked to elaborate on their answers in which they provide specific examples. Taking these two forms of data collection into account, researchers then sort and organize the information to be able to highlight the essential characteristics. Given there is not a lot of research on this specific topic, researchers will also aim to cross-reference their results with the other handful of studies that have been conducted in order to establish the findings are consistent, which they are (Rivera, 2014).

Visionary as a characteristic would signify a leader that is creative and passionate (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011;Bonilla-Santiago, 1992; Rivera, 2014). In this sense, leaders are motivated to develop their own vision while simultaneously working to get their subordinates to adopt such vision and work together towards the common goal (M. Taylor et al., 2014). For Latinas, this means that in order to get their subordinates to adopt the vision they must be creative and demonstrate that they are passionate about such goals hence acting upon the visionary characteristic.

Optimism is defined as the inclination to anticipate the best possible outcome by remaining hopeful/positive (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). For Latinas, it is important to adopt optimism because of the number of barriers they face. The theories established above identify factors, such as race, gender, and identity conflict which can contribute to the barriers and affect the perceived leadership effectiveness Latinas receive from their followers. Through all these hardships though, it is crucial for them to remain optimistic.

High integrity is another notable characteristic, this refers to how honest and/or ethical one is (De Valencia, 2008; Rivera, 2014). For Latinas to have a positive impact as well as the support of their followers, they should aim to be honest in the way they lead and feed information to their team members. If they can effectively display a level of high integrity, their followers will be more inclined to respect them as leaders (De Valencia, 2008).

The last characteristic, compassion, is defined as the act of caring or being sympathetic for others (De Valencia, 2008). As previously discussed, *familismo, marianismo, and simpatia* are all cultural differences that are significant in Latinas (Holvino, 2008). Latinas’ upbringing emphasizes these cultural factors which are centered around the idea of being compassionate when serving and helping their perspective groups.

The four characteristics detailed above, have been identified by Latinas leaders as more important than others in multiple studies. Following survey completion, interviews have been conducted with Latina leaders to elaborate on their beliefs as to why these four characteristics are more important. The first-person accounts they get from these leaders result in specific examples that detail when they have felt they most exert these characteristics or how the specific characteristic has helped their development of them as effective leaders. Northouse (2016) defined effective leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p.6). Cote (2017) proposes three approaches to an effective leadership strategy: trait approach, situational approach, and transformational and transactional leaders. Adoption of these three approaches results in an effective leader that serves as a role model as well as positively influences their followers by demonstrating integrity (Cote, 2017). Torres (2013) also details effective leaders, are leaders who look for and anticipate opportunities in the future so that they are prepared to act accordingly. These aspects of effective leaders are factors that Latina leaders aim to adopt through the characteristics they deem as most important and attainable from their life and cultural differences.

Furthermore, although the findings above have been consistent across multiple studies it is important to note that the use of self-report surveys results in both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages can be that surveys can reach more respondents more quickly and effectively, given distribution can be fairly easy. Self-report surveys are also believed to be advantageous because of the belief that no one knows you better than yourself (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). However, discrepancies can occur when respondents inflate or fake their responses when self-reporting (McDonald, 2008). To minimize such effects and further validate the results, researchers should look to incorporate behavioral measures into their studies. By incorporating a behavioral measure, researchers can physically observe what behaviors they see from Latina leaders rather than solely relying on what they self-report or say (McDonald, 2008).

Recommendations For Latina Leaders

There are recommendations for Latinas in leadership positions that consider factors that go beyond possessing the appropriate characteristics. Factors such as biculturalism and a high self-confidence can be used as leverage when advocating for one's occupation of a leadership role in an organization. Whether a Latina's culture and upbringing or internal factors, they can contribute to a Latina's success as a leader in organizations in the United States. Table 2 provides a summary of the following recommendations.

Table 2: Recommendations for Latina Leaders

Recommendation	**Examples**	**Advantages**
Use biculturalism to your advantage[1]	- Promote yourself as a connecting point in foreign transactions. - Advocate for your bilingualism as a critical business skill.	- Asset in the development of global businesses.
Network[2]	Three questions to ask yourself: - Who can help accomplish this goal? - Who is an expert on this specific issue or topic?	- New opportunities and relationships flourish.

	- Whom does this person know that can be helpful?	
Look for a mentor[3]	Consider looking for someone who: - Works in the same/desired sector. - Has experience. - Is successful.	- Guidance is more personal and specific to your sector.
Develop high self-confidence[2]	- Value your heritage and realize it's also a privilege to offer a different cultural perspective.	- Can help overcome challenges and develop a winner mentality.
Note. **[1] Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011, Catalyst, 2003, [2] Rivera, 2014, [3] Carillo (2009)**		

First, Latinas have the advantage of being exposed to two different cultures, Latin and Western cultures, increasing the range of different cultural perspectives. Latinas should be prone to use this biculturalism to their advantage (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; Catalyst, 2003). Organizations continue to prioritize the need for continuous development, a way they approach this need is by striving to grow into global businesses. As organizations grow, they may embark on different market needs which can result in the organization dispersing geographically (Lagerström, & Andersson, 2003). A Latina's biculturalism is a resource, they can act as connecting points in foreign transactions (Catalyst, 2003). Latinas should recognize that there is also *value* in their culture because of the perspective it can offer in both global and US transactions. Latinas should use their bilingualism to their advantage. Currently, it is estimated that there are approximately between 325 to 350 million people whose first language is Spanish, making it one of the most spoken languages (Catalyst, 2003). Three out of four Latinas speak Spanish (Catalyst, 2003). The skill of being able to speak more than one language is attractive to organizations given personnel within come from many diverse backgrounds. As a leader, it is essential to be able to communicate with your team and outside your team which is why biculturalism along with bilingualism is considered a valuable business skill.

Next, for Latinas to advance and achieve representation in leadership roles, it is essential to engage in networking (Rivera, 2014). When one actively engages in networking and meeting new people, new opportunities surface because of these relationships. Many Latina leaders have approached networking as something that naturally stems from their personalities. In their culture, interdependence is seen as something crucial, interacting and meeting new people is emphasized under this cultural perspective (Holvino, 2008). As a result, being involved and contributing to their perspective groups or communities is naturally embedded into their personalities. Although making such connections can be easy, it is important to explicitly know one’s objectives in such relationships. Rivera (2014) gives three questions to consider when approaching fellow professionals: who can help accomplish this goal, who is an expert on this specific issue or topic and whom does this person know that can be helpful?

Going hand in hand with networking, Latinas can also take this a step further and find a mentor. A mentor would be a great addition to a Latina’s networking circle, given they can develop a closer relationship with this person. Ideally, when considering a mentor, Latinas should aim to look for someone working in their sector of interest, and someone with experience and success in their given specialty. Lastly, another characteristic they may look for in their mentor would be someone with the same ethnic background as them. Carillo (2009) conducted a study on Latinos in leadership positions in the education sector in which it was reported that when mentees had a mentor of the same ethnic background it was more impactful. In these relationships, individuals not only identify with the mentor on a deeper level but rather they are also able to see explicit evidence and/or examples that they *can* aspire to occupy these big leadership roles despite their shared barriers. The sharing of these stories and experiences can be a great source of motivation.

Lastly, research revealed that in addition to societal challenges, Latinas also face many internal challenges. Despite what type of challenges or barriers Latina’s encounter, it is important for them to actively work towards achieving and maintaining high self-confidence. In a labor market that is competitive and built in a way that puts Latinas at a disadvantage by restricting access to certain roles and relationships (Catalyst, 2003), it is important to develop self-confidence. Increasing one’s self-confidence as a leader can help minimize the fear Latinas may experience from being afraid to take risks or ask for help (Rivera, 2014). Campbell (2013) interviewed twelve Hispanic women leaders regarding their driving forces as leaders. It was found that the main driving force was a winner mentality, a mentality that allows Latinas to overcome challenges while staying focused on their goals (Campbell, 2013). Along with a winner mentality, it was also noted that the main themes in this mentality specifically included, self-confidence, self-determination, and goal orientation (Campbell, 2013). Additionally, despite the pressure Latinas may feel from their familial expectations, Bonilla- Rodriguez (2011) also identified that these same familial influences along with role models and self-confidence turn out to function as positive influences in Latina's leadership journeys. Furthermore, as Latina’s step into leadership roles, they are responsible for advocating for the breaking of stereotypes that hinder their success in the leadership field (De Valencia, 2008). Latinas must become comfortable with sharing their heritage and realizing that being different from their peers although intimidating, can and is valuable (Catalyst, 2003). With a sense of high self-confidence, it will help them propel themselves to exceed expectations placed upon this group resulting in greater levels of effectiveness as leaders (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011).

Recommendations For Organizations

The section above highlighted actions Latinas can implement into their professional journeys to develop as leaders. Both leaders and organizations play a role in leadership development. On one hand, it is the responsibility of Latinas to prepare themselves with the proper skills to succeed in these leadership roles. However, Latinas may be qualified to occupy a leadership role but if an organization does not create an organizational environment in which they can operate, it will result in drawbacks for both the leaders and organizations. The following section will present recommendations that organizations can adopt to promote the success of Latinas in leadership roles (Table 3).

Table 3: Recommendations for Organizations

Recommendation	**Examples**
Implement a program that coaches leader identity[1]	- Coaches should help diminish identity conflict by prompting Latinas to reflect, reframe and redesign thought processes about their leader identity.
Promote an inclusive organizational culture[2]	- Implement inclusive everyday behaviors. - Implement any changes into organizations mission. - Give recognition for everyone's accomplishments.
Actively advocate for Latinas[3]	- Remove the granting of token status. - Include Latinas in high potential matters. - Speak up for employees that go unnoticed.

Note. [1] Yip et al., 2020 [2]Ferdman et al., 2020 [3]Catalyst, 2003

Social identity theory states that individuals have a self-identity that is made up of multiple identities that are developed through the different social groups they belong to (Islam, 2014; Tajfe & Turner, 1979). As leaders' step into leadership roles, the development of their leader identity, which can be defined as the degree to which a person views themselves as a leader, also surfaces (Yip et al., 2020). Research has found that especially in minorities, the addition of this new identity can result in identity conflict as a result of the cognitive dissonance that occurs when leaders have a difficult time merging their identities (Karelais & Guillen, 2014; Yip et al., 2020). Festinger (1962) defines dissonance as the accumulation of a person's expectations throughout their life of things that go together and things that do not go together. When the expectations are not fulfilled to one's expectations, dissonance occurs. Given the external and internal barriers that Latinas face, they might be more prone to this cognitive dissonance when developing their leader identity. Organizations should implement a program in which there is coaching offered to leaders that helps them navigate their leader identity. Coaches can be an extremely useful resource for leaders because they can prompt individuals to reflect and become aware of internal scripts that may be hindering them from achieving their maximum potential as a leader (Yip et al., 2020). By making leaders aware of the internal assumptions, they may be reinforcing such as imposter syndrome, the coach can also teach leaders how to reframe and redesign their thought processes. Witherspoon (2004) suggested the implementation of double-loop coaching which is a practice that "involves reflection (stepping back from a dominant narrative); reframing (considering alternative frames); and redesign (identity work)" (p.263).

Organizations must also change or adapt at an organizational level to the addition of Latinas as team members. Organizations should look to enforce an organizational culture that promotes the development of an inclusive leadership team and environment. Ferdman et al. (2020) state that inclusive leadership should be categorized as an organizational imperative. This means that in order to implement organizational-level changes, leadership should promote and facilitate the inclusion of everyone while simultaneously advancing equity and social justice as focal goals. Ferdman et al. (2020) have offered specific ways to approach DEI and inclusive leadership such as implementing it into everyday work. Examples of this can be saying hello to everyone at work, connecting everyone with everyone, and giving recognition for everyone's accomplishments (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011; Catalyst, 2003; Ferdman et al., 2020).

Changes implemented should be aimed to be connected to the organization's mission when possible. Ferdman et al., (2020) suggests that in order to successfully connect DEI changes to the organization's mission the approach must be strategic and systemic. Such changes should be approached as a learning opportunity for both individual and team development. Organizations can communicate to employees that diversity within is a source of collective advantage while inviting personnel to the exposure and reflection of such learning (Ferdman et al., 2020). By doing so organizations can create an environment that nurtures psychological safety for Latinas so that they can take risks comfortably and not be afraid to make mistakes (Rivera, 2014). This is important because a big part of the success of an organization relies on pushing out new products or ideas to the public. In order to come up with these ideas, organizations rely on personnel and leaders that are willing to think outside the box and take risks (Capowski, 1994). Taking risks however can be stress and fear inducing, especially when leaders know it could negatively impact their perceived effectiveness. If organizations are able to provide an increased sense of psychological safety, they can also expect positive results in the “facilitated development of employees’ creative problem-solving capacity” (Carmeli et al., 2014 p.116). By connecting values of inclusive leadership to the organization's mission it can create an organizational culture that values diversity, risk taking and different perspectives that come along with different ethnic backgrounds.

Finally, organizations should actively advocate for Latinas. The statistics of Latinas in leadership roles revealed that the percentage is fairly low, meaning that often leadership teams in one organization are not going to have an abundant number of Latinas on their team. In other words, Latinas may often be seen as token employees in their perspective teams. Token employees are employees who in an organization or group are either the only one or one of the few that are representative of their group (Nielsen & Madsen, 2019). It is important to steer away from tokenism because research has found that being granted token status results in significantly negative effects on the individual and their management aspirations (Nielsen & Madsen, 2019).

Team members should also make the effort to advocate for Latinas in a positive manner. Examples of behaviors that team members can engage in include speaking up for employees that may go unnoticed during meetings, actively including Latinas in high-potential matters, and gaining a deeper understanding of their cultural differences (Catalyst, 2003). While engaging in these behaviors it is important to display these behaviors in such a way that does not make Latinas feel and be portrayed as if they are token employees.

Future Research

The present overview has revealed that much work still has to be done on Latinas in the field of leadership. Representation in the applied setting in organizations should be increased but representation in research also must be increased. In leadership research, researchers rarely include minority women and even fewer specifically will focus on the demographic of Latinas. The reality is that this can be partially because there are very few Latinas in these leadership roles to begin with, however such underrepresentation does not mean this population is nonexistent (Mendez-Morse, 2000). Researchers must begin to prioritize the investigation of Latinas to diminish the neglect they are currently facing in research.

Specifically, more research needs to be done on the characteristics, behaviors, and contexts that make Latina leaders effective. The current overview revealed that only a handful of studies have researched such topic thus far. Characteristics are something crucial to the development and advancement of leaders. If we want to work towards closing the gap in the representation of Latinas in leadership, Latinas must have the proper resources and information to better prepare themselves and future generations to take on such roles.

Bonilla-Rodriguez (2011) also suggests that further studies should look into researching Latinas by age groups. Within Latinas as a demographic group there are developmental and life stage differences that have started to surface. Although the cultural scripts listed in this overview continue to be the same, the significance and impact they now have has been changing as Latina’s progress through different life stages. The term, *machismo,* is deeply rooted in Hispanic culture and has been shown to have negative effects on leadership attainment for Latinas. As a community, the current generation of Latinas has been more active in working towards dismantling stereotypes that are reinforced within their culture such as this term, *machismo.* With future studies looking at different age groups, we could see how and if these beliefs change as Latinas develop through different life stages and what different effects it has on their leadership journey.

Differences in geographic locations should also be considered in future research. Much research has been conducted and that was encountered throughout this overview has been conducted with samples that reside in major popular cities within the United States. While targeting major cities facilitates being able to reach a bigger sample of Latinas, it also leaves Latinas from smaller cities out of these studies. It is important to account for the voices and experiences of all Latinas because different times and places result in different experiences that can alter the results as well as bring new information to the table.

By using the broad categories of Latin(a) and Hispanic it allowed for inclusion of different ethnicities when referring to Latinas. People that identified as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, South or Central American, or other Spanish descent or origin regardless of race were accounted for in this overview and placed under the same umbrella term (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Future research can aim to distinguish between these different ethnicities to see how and if different ethnicities within Latin culture differentiate. Researchers could see to what extent the cultural scripts detailed in this overview present themselves for each different ethnicity and generation. Lastly, researchers should aim to consider how individuals of multiethnic heritage develop as leaders given their different experiences or challenges could lead to different outcomes.

The suggestions above only detail a handful of advancements that could be made in regard to Latinas in leadership in the research setting. Any adoption of any of the recommendations suggested in this overview or in other studies would be a great addition to the literature on Latinas in leadership. The increase in representation of Latinas as a demographic of interest in research should lead to positive outcomes for, Latinas, researchers, and organizations.

Conclusion

Increases in the representation of Latinas as leaders have been made in more recent years. Such advancements however are certainly not enough, and an extensive amount of work still has to be done in order to achieve an appropriate percentage of Latinas in leadership positions. The overview presented details the history as well as the current state of Latinas in leadership positions in the United States. From this information, challenges that exist as well as theoretical explanations as to why these challenges may exist. The challenges revealed that for example, factors such as *famialismo* and *marianismo,* can have both positive and negative effects on the journey of Latinas as leaders. It was important to note both the positive and negative effects of challenges because when one is aware of both sides of the relationship it not only creates awareness, but it also empowers a person to engage in behaviors that aligns with the positives instead (De Valencia, 2008). As a society, it is not only enough to be aware of such negative effects but rather one must also actively work towards dismantling such negative frameworks surrounding Latinas.

Organizations and leadership roles continue to develop which means Latinas also must continue to develop. The overview also aimed to serve as a tool for the advancement of Latinas in leadership positions. It highlighted leadership styles, characteristics, and recommendations based on the information that was gathered about Latinas and their culture. By making Latinas aware of behaviors they can engage in to propel themselves as leaders, the representation of this demographic can be increased. Additionally, organizations must also recognize the role they play in this relationship. Organizations must also build themselves in a way where Latinas are offered the appropriate organizational climate in which they can freely thrive in. If organizations are better equipped to support Latinas in their work setting, retention rates for organizations can also increase making them more attractive to personnel.

Altogether, representation matters, whether that is in research or in the applied setting, Latina representation in leadership roles must be increased. Latinas must continue to actively advocate for themselves, especially in sectors where representation is relatively low. Experienced Latinas in leadership roles should aim to serve as resources and sources of inspiration for future generations. By sticking together as a community, Latinas can all work towards a common goal of achieving proper representation and demonstrating that they are qualified and capable of occupying leadership roles.

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