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**She Se Puede:
Exploring the Career Development of Latinas
in the San Francisco
Bay Area**

Brittney Varela
University of San Francisco
Master of Arts in International Studies

She Se Puede: Exploring the Career Development of Latinas in the San Francisco Bay Area

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by Brittney Varela

May 1st, 2020

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

Capstone Adviser

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Abstract

The professional identities of Latinas in the United States have undergone some major changes in recent times. As women and ethnic minorities, Latinas are a part of two underrepresented groups facing inequities in the workforce. This research focuses on the career development of ten Latinas in the San Francisco Bay area, with their stories and experiences publicized on a public podcast. *She Se Puede* podcast consists of ten episodes recorded at the University of San Francisco, discussing career development and major factors that limit the professional advancement of Latinas. This applied project was designed around scholarly research and in-person interviews, with the intent to identify common themes and experiences in the professional journeys of the Latinas taking part in this study. This podcast has reached listeners globally, and is aimed towards empowering the next generation of Latinas to create change not only in the United States workforce, but on an international level. The results of this research demonstrate that while Latinas expressed frustration with the inequities they face in the workforce, they have been able to advance professionally despite the presence of institutional inequality.

She Se Puede podcast can be found on Spotify and Apple with the following links:

[She Se Puede Pod- Apple](#)

[She Se Puede Pod- Spotify](#)

Key Terms: Latinas, Latinx, Identity, Workforce, Inequity, Professionalism, Diversity, Culture, Community

Acknowledgments:

This applied project was not easy, it took a lot of time, work, and dedication, but I could not have done it without the support of my family, friends and all the wonderful guests on the *She Se Puede* Podcast. I would first like to thank the ten amazing women who shared their personal stories to the public, as their authenticity and vulnerability is what made this podcast possible. Second, I would like to thank my adviser, Professor Christina Garcia Lopez, for her guidance and words of encouragement throughout this year-long process, as well as all of the other professors in the MAIS program who helped me choose a research subject that I was passionate about.

Thank you to the strong women in my family for always empowering me and taking pride in our Mexican-American culture. Lastly, I would like to thank my biggest support system, my mom and dad. Thank you for giving me the opportunities that you did not have and allowing me to pursue anything I dreamt of, this Masters is not only mine, but yours too.

She Se Puede!

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION-

As of 2018, women only make up 4.8 % of CEOs of the fortune 500 companies, and that 4.8% are still making less than their male counterparts. Women have historically had a challenging and strenuous relationship with occupational mobility. The gender pay gap and overall underrepresentation of women in leadership roles are disconcerting with Latina women at the very bottom of the wage gap. “Latinas in the United States are typically paid just 53 cents for every dollar paid to White, non-Hispanic men. Overall, women employed full time, year-round are typically paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to men...” (UnidosUS 2018). The economic inequality that Latinas have historically faced has negatively affected their occupational mobility, making it difficult to move up the professional ladder.

For my Masters applied project, I have created a podcast titled “She Se Puede” that includes the personal stories of Latinas in the Bay Area and their experiences of being a woman of diversity in the workforce. Identifying as a Latina myself, I have been surrounded by many strong women of diversity my whole life, I wanted to showcase personal stories of Latinas and inspire any listeners who may be going through their own professional journey. My research and applied project aims to educate and inform the public on ways Latinas are breaking through these barriers and achieving personal success through obtaining leadership roles across a variety of sectors of the economy.

Although this project is focused on Latinas in the Bay Area, I frame it within the specific context of international studies, through examining past scholarly data that discusses the importance of the employment of Latinas globally, for example the book *Women at Work: Challenges for Latin America* (2011) thoroughly examines the obstacles women face in the labor market specifically within six different Latin American countries. They evaluate the progress that has been made while also proposing new recommendations to tackle these inequities. The authors state “Higher levels of employment and earnings for women thus contribute not only to current economic growth, but also to future progress by helping break the intergenerational cycle of poverty” (Lund et al, 2011: 5). On top of examining scholarly data pertaining to Latinas in the workforce, the interviews I conducted include a global perspective as many of the women interviewed are first generation immigrants and hold strong connections to their culture and Latinx upbringing.

Their professional identities range from owning a small business, to leading diversity and inclusion programs, and leadership positions in fields with historically low Latina representation . The title for this podcast derives from the Spanish language saying, ‘Si Se Puede’ meaning ‘Yes you can’, switching ‘Si’ to ‘She’ signifies that the guests on this podcast all identify as women. My podcast has been shared with multiple school districts and after school programs, such as the SF Unified School District, San Mateo Unified School District, Dallas Unified School District, Salesian Boys & Girls club and some universities throughout California including USF. As well as some non profit organizations including the Latino Community Foundation, Chicana Latina

Foundation, Mujeres Unidas y Activas, Women's Building SF, We all Grow Latina Network, LatinaVida and many more. All these organizations aim to fight for gender equality, women's empowerment, and the Latinx community throughout the Bay Area and beyond.

Through these interviews, I have been able to understand the great power of personal storytelling and how shared experiences can bring people together and uplift communities, the negative effects gender inequities have on women in the workforce, and how being a part of an underrepresented group can reinforce one's drive to be heard. Being a part of an underrepresented group can definitely hinder one's confidence in the workforce, but being able to overcome these workforce biases can push an individual to work harder at advancing professionally. I have been able to share the stories of these women with a large public audience, by ensuring this podcast is easily accessible on numerous media platforms as well as by promoting it through social media and my personal network. Listeners of this podcast come from different gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, including Latinas themselves as well as non-Latinas who are in positions of power that may affect the career development and advancement of Latinas.

Although each individual story has differed, the hypothesis I had before starting my interviews seems to have been accurate to a certain extent. I hypothesized that many or all of the women I interviewed would have experienced workplace inequities based on their Latina identities but have found ways to overcome and persevere in the workforce, allowing them to advance professionally. Many of the women I interviewed had to

overcome organizational obstacles caused by structural stereotypes, yet these women were so driven, that they drew further motivation from the blockades and persisted to overcome them. Significantly, all of the women I spoke with, in one way or another, help mentor young Latinas and women of diversity, in their professional and/or personal lives.

There are two main components of my applied project, scholarly research and live in-person interviews. I will be comparing past research regarding Latinas in the professional sector to my own research via these interviews, articulating how these women are creating change for Latinas in the workforce. Although all of these women are currently working in the Bay Area, I believe listening to their stories can be beneficial to any listener globally, because regardless of one's cultural background, wanting to advance professionally is a goal that many people have and many people struggle with. Being able to hear real authentic stories and experiences can possibly help inspire an individual to get through their own professional obstacles. Thus, once I complete my graduate degree, I plan to transcribe these interviews into Spanish to make it available for listeners who do not speak English but culturally relate with these women.

I believe the research I have conducted and the content I have created with the help of my enthusiastic interviewees will have an impact on women globally, hearing these stories on a public platform that is available internationally, can possibly reach women who would not have been able to hear these stories otherwise. Although I am an academic pursuing my Masters degree, I created this podcast to ensure that, regardless of one's educational background or socioeconomic status, anyone can understand these stories and have public access to them. I can only hope that the personal inspiration and

empowerment I have received from listening to these women's stories can impact a broader global audience and help lead to changing the historically negative professional and economic immobility Latinas have faced.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW-

After conducting research on the relevant scholarship written in the past three decades, I have identified three main themes: structural invisibility, educational inequality, and the absence of Latinas in corporate roles. Although this scholarly research was developed across different time periods, these are the overall commonalities that each author addressed. I incorporated these themes into my research by using them to navigate my conversations with my research subjects.

2.1 Structural Invisibility:

The first major theme I identified from the literature was the content regarding structural invisibility. In this context I refer to “structural invisibility” as the lack of social recognition that the people who may be at the lowest paid sectors of employment are generally the oil that keeps the motor running, or in this case, the United States economy. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo discusses this in her work, *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (2001), as she explains how many Latina/o immigrants living in the United States are employed in a “low-level job”, yet they are what keeps this country running. “...Workers who keep the office buildings, restaurants, and malls running are also likely to be Mexican or Central American immigrants, as are many of those who work behind the scenes...” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007:25). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007) explores the work life of Latina immigrants

specifically in domestic work focusing on women working for wealthy families in Southern California. The women Hondagneu-Sotelo researched help the families by cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children amongst other forms of domestic work.

The unrecognized domestic work of Latina immigrants is just one example of labor in the US economic structure that has been historically muted. Hondagneu-Sotelo discusses the under-appreciation these women experience in their line of work. She discusses how many economies rely on low wage Latino immigrant work, and families who employ Latina domestic workers do not recognize the extent of work these women do, usually underpaid, “Their affluent lifestyle and smoothly running household depended on one Latina immigrant woman” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007:25). She discusses some of her research on Latina immigrant domestic workers and how these women have a huge impact on the lives of upper-class families, through raising their children, being a teacher, housekeeper and allowing these parents to hold a full time occupation.

Denise Segura, in her article, *Chicana and Mexican Immigrant Women at Work: The Impact of Class, Race, and Gender on Occupational Mobility* (1989), discusses the occupational mobility of 40 women of Mexican descent in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1970s-80s. One aspect of her research that I found interesting is that jobs that the U.S economic structure characterized as dead end, low wage occupations were viewed by these Chicana and Mexican women as decent work, based on their own occupational expectations (Segura 1989: 39). This shows that although times have changed since the 1980s, in retrospect, it was not that long ago that many Latinas had low expectations in

regards to their professional status. Latinas can still be seen in domestic work or jobs that are characterized as “low wage.”

2.2 Educational Inequality:

Another leading theme consistent throughout the literature that I researched is that of educational inequality, historically impacting Latinas. Not everyone in the United States has the opportunity and support to obtain a higher education, and this research made it clear, although the statistics of Latinas enrolled in institutions of higher education is greater today than twenty years ago, there is still great progress to be made in terms of education. Velma Menchaca, in her article *Latina Titans: A Journey of Inspiration* (2016) discusses how, historically, it was essential for Latinas to be very involved in their family life and were not expected to attend an institution of higher education or move out of their homes in general (Menchaca 2016: 97). Latinas are still extremely underrepresented in the academic sector, resulting in historically low academic achievement scores among the Latino/a population” (Storlie 2016: 305). For many immigrant families, education is often celebrated and seen as the essential key to advancement but the institutional inequality that is ever so present in our society results in less opportunities for Latinas to pursue a higher education. As much of this research discusses, the pressure of helping your family and staying at home can outweigh the priority of extending your education or professional identity in some family dynamics. Educational inequality is a leading factor in hindering the ability to grow professionally, especially today as many jobs require an academic degree in order to be considered for a position, although this is not the case for all career paths, the demand for a higher education is only increasing.

On top of the obstacles of pursuing a higher education, there also comes barriers of seeking employment for some women, due to the responsibilities at home. The book *Women at Work: Challenges in Latin America* (2004) touches on research conducted in six Latin American countries of women in the workforce and the overall impact it has on these economies, "...women continue to bear the greatest responsibility for child rearing, caregiving, and chores in the home. These gender-defined roles... are deep rooted ones, and shape the choices women make about seeking and continuing with paid employment" (Lund et al, 2011: 8). The authors share how these gender defined roles have a major impact on the choices these women make professionally, and has a negative effect on the economic empowerment of women. Although the professional roles women hold in Latin America are still unequal to those obtained by men there is some positive change occurring, "Among the few positive stylized facts that have characterized the evolution of Latin American labor markets during the past decade are the steady increase in female labor force participation and the closing gap between male and female wages" (Lund et al, 2011: 12). As stated above, the income inequality gap is changing in Latin America but closing the gender pay gap is still a work in progress, as it is globally.

2.3 Absence in Corporate Roles:

The final theme that was consistent throughout the literature was the overall absence of Latinas in managerial and corporate roles. Kalpana Pai, in her article *Glass Ceiling: Role of Women in the Corporate World* (2009) discusses the struggle for women to make it up the corporate ladder, especially for Black and Latina women. She explains how many women in the corporate world believe they "have to be 'better' than men to

achieve similar advances” (Kalpana 2006: 421). Having to work twice as hard to receive equal recognition is historically a struggle for women and people of diversity. Many of these authors emphasize the extremely small percentage of Latinas, and women in general, who hold corporate roles in the US. ”...Women are often absent from leadership roles such as chief executive officer (CEO), board member, president, and dean” (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017: 312). Although women obtain more than half of bachelor’s and master’s degrees and approximately 50% of doctoral degrees (Spivey 2017:312), there is still an extremely low percentage of women able to strengthen their professional identity and move up the corporate ladder.

There are many stereotypes pertaining to the Latinx community and their occupational mobility; for example, the Latinx community has been associated with child-care, domestic work, gardening, and janitorial jobs, etc. These stereotypes and assumptions are uneducated and a misrepresentation of the Latinx community. Cristina Beltran, in her book *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity* (2010) discusses these assumptions and argues that the Latinx community is made up of multifaceted individuals covering many sectors of the United States workforce. “An undocumented immigrant from Guatemala is Hispanic; so is a third-generation Mexican American lawyer. Moreover, both categories are racially indeterminate: Latinos can be white, black, indigenous, and every combination thereof” (Beltran 2010: 6). Beltran puts emphasis on how the Latinx community is multifaceted, consisting of multiple cultures and homelands. The categorizing, misrepresentation and assumptions of Latinas in the

workplace can lead to their absence in corporate roles and overall inability to advance professionally.

After researching and contextualizing the discourse written on the historical struggles Latinas face in relation to career development, structural invisibility, educational inequality and the absence in corporate roles, there seems to be a strong connection with professional advancement and institutional inequality that is deeply rooted in the United States. These inequities hinder their ability to advance professionally, in organizational realms such as corporate, domestic or agricultural worlds, the barriers restricting Latinas have minimally changed overtime. Career development is a difficult process for everyone but being a Latina seems to have additional barriers to overcome in order to achieve advances similar to their male counterparts.

The scholarly books and journals I researched give a small understanding of a bigger picture regarding Latinas in the workplace. Reviewing scholarly research was only a small part of a much bigger project, as I began to conduct my own research and interviews in the Bay Area. Reviewing research that was conducted internationally offered a wider perspective of the experiences Latinas have in the workforce and I believe the research I have conducted through this applied project will only add to the overall collection of data pertaining to Latinas in the workforce.

CHAPTER 3

3. PROJECT STRUCTURE / DELIVERABLES

3.1 Podcast-

My research for *She Se Puede* Podcast is designed to be an accessible social platform to the public, in hopes to educate, inform, and empower other women of diversity through the personal career development of the women interviewed. I did not want my guests to all be a part of the corporate world, as my goal was to have a very diverse group of women with different professional identities, experiences and educational backgrounds. All interviews were conducted live and in person at the University of San Francisco's KUSF radio station.

The atmosphere throughout the duration of the interviews was very casual, as I wanted my interviewees to be as comfortable as possible, as many expressed concern and nervousness. For several of the interviewees, this was their first time podcasting and/or discussing these subjects publicly. There were times throughout the interviews when emotions were high; anger, sadness and happiness were all present throughout my time with my guests. I will further discuss how these emotions came about in my results section of this project report.

As I began brainstorming goals I wanted to meet through my research, I wanted to ensure that the stories these women are sharing would be heard and potentially beneficial to listeners. My goals for this project led me to podcasting, as the podcasting world has greatly expanded this past decade and has gained a diverse following through its simple accessibility. Being able to listen to a podcast while driving to work, going to the gym, or doing laundry at home makes accessing the content almost effortless. This easy accessibility attracts a large audience as you do not need to take time out of your busy schedule in order to benefit from the content you are listening to.

In addition to being a popular audio platform today, podcasts possess the power of storytelling, which can give the audience an authentic and realistic perspective that individuals can relate to. *She Se Puede* listeners are able to hear each guest's stories and experiences first hand, a raw and unscripted narrative of their career development as Latinas. One common similarity that all my interviewees held was their abundance of enthusiasm to be a part of the *She Se Puede* podcast. Every interviewee was more than happy to be involved and although it was the first time for many of them to be on a podcast, there was no hesitation to participate in this project. Being face to face with my interviewee gave me a better understanding as a researcher and allowed me to connect to my guests on a personal level. Identifying as a Latina myself allowed me to connect culturally with these women in different aspects, from our family backgrounds, importance of education, and being a child of immigrants, I was able to resonate with many of their experiences.

The main component of research for my capstone applied project is the data I collected through interviewing for the *She Se Puede Podcast*. I was able to recruit interviewees who hold positions across a variety of sectors in the San Francisco Bay Area economy, and in the process, I was able to build a professional and personal relationship with these women by getting to know each one of them on an individual basis.

As I began to plan out my applied project, I understood that there were going to be some obstacles as I had zero experience of podcasting or audio production. Although I am new to podcasting, I have listened to many myself and have pinpointed some areas that are intriguing for me, such as sound quality, tone of voice, and resonating with the content either emotionally or personally. Being able to create a platform that others can connect with is a key principle towards the overall success of a podcast.

My initial step was to figure out how I was going to obtain equipment and receive training on how to use it. After talking to numerous professors in the media studies department at the University of San Francisco, I was referred to KUSF college radio station. KUSF has audio and podcasting equipment that is fairly simple for those who may not have experience in the audio production field. I had the opportunity to speak with other students who have their own podcasts and was given advice and tips in order to make my podcast public and easily accessible. On top of receiving podcasting advice, I also needed proper training in using the audio equipment. KUSF was able to provide me with multiple training sessions, beginning in August 2019 I had a total of five training sessions that lasted through March 2020. These sessions consisted of equipment training, online applications, editing audio content and tips and tricks on hosting

episodes. These training sessions allowed me to carry out my interviews and research properly, ensuring the content would sound as professional as possible. The audio software I used for all interviews was the RODE Caster Pro, a fairly new form of equipment that is solely designed for podcasting.

After being properly trained with the podcasting technology and running through some practice interviews and trials, it was time for recruitment. I had to find ten women who identify as Latina and who currently live or work in the Bay Area. Recruiting my guests was not a difficult task, although I anticipated it would be before beginning my project. I was able to connect to these women by 1) using my personal network and connections, 2) social media, and 3) attending numerous events throughout the Bay Area where I knew a Latinx community would be in attendance. Every woman I reached out to was extremely enthusiastic about being a part of this podcast and wanted to share their stories.

It was the beginning of Summer 2019 when I began my initial search for interviewees, which consisted of utilizing my personal network, social media and attending public events. Being a Bay Area native with many connections in San Francisco offered me an advantage by allowing me to use my personal and professional network in connecting to interviewees. I made use of my personal network, such as my family, friends, former coworkers and acquaintances through years of working and attending school in the Bay Area, which allowed me to spread the word and receive recommendations for potential podcast guests. I was also very active on recruiting through social media, predominantly Instagram and LinkedIn. I was able to connect with

many of my interviewees through these social media platforms and receive their personal contact information to provide details on what *She Se Puede* Podcast was all about. I attended numerous events throughout the Bay Area that I knew would have a large Latinx community in attendance, in hopes of meeting potential interviewees. These events included a Latinas in Tech event hosted by Twitter, the SF Mission District's Carnaval festival, a giving circle hosted by the Latino Community Foundation, amongst a few others. This strategy came to be very successful, as I was able to connect with three women who later became guests on *She Se Puede*. Some of the women I interviewed also offered me recommendations for additional guests for the show, and I was able to connect with two other interviewees through these referrals.

Prior to conducting my first interview, and with the help of my advisor and professors, I put together a set of general questions to ask each interviewee, in order to ensure that our conversations would stay on topic. Although I did ask all ten guests the same questions, I tailored some new additional questions for each of my guests relating to their professional backgrounds. Below are general questions around which each interview was loosely structured; although each episode flowed differently, I made an effort to frame all interviews around the following questions.

Interview Questions:

1. What do you consider your professional identity to be?
2. How has your identity as a Latina affected your professional life? Advancement?
3. Does being Latina come up at all in the workplace? How so?
4. Have you ever experienced discrimination because of your identity?
5. What were the main things that helped support you in achieving professional success as a Latina?
6. Do you consider yourself a role model for other Latina women?

7. Do you mentor younger Latina women? If you do, how so?
 8. Have you had to overcome any organizational obstacles throughout your professional journey? If so, how did you get through them?
 9. Does/did your family or close friends have any expectations for you professionally?
 10. Do you feel that you are creating change for Latinas in the workforce?
-

Each of the ten episodes was live, and all were recorded at KUSF; the average duration ranged from about twenty minutes to one hour in length, depending on the interviewee and flow of conversation. I stressed to all my interviewees that I would be editing the content following the interview and any mistakes would be removed, such as long pauses, forgetting your train of thought, excessive coughing, uncontrollable emotions, any outside disruptions etc. Several of the questions brought up emotions and sometimes took longer to express, thus I made clear to my guests that they had ample time to answer any questions and there was no rush in their responses. My goal was to have the interview flow as smoothly and naturally as possible, allowing my guest to answer the questions on their own time.

After each interview, I had multiple locations to store my data, first being the memory disk that was inserted into the recording device throughout the duration of the interview. I then transferred the data to the computer located in the recording studio and uploaded all the content onto my google drive. I then downloaded all the episodes to my personal computer which I then backed up onto a USB drive. I was very diligent in securing my research content on multiple platforms, to protect the data and make certain nothing was lost. Although I did run into some technical difficulties, I was able to work everything out with the help of KUSF employees.

Following the completion of each interview was the editing process of the episodes. The editing software I used for all episodes was GarageBand, which comes with all Apple computers making it easier for myself as I own a MacBook. I used this software program because it was designed for beginners in the audio production field, and thus easily accessible for me. I uploaded my content and began to remove any long pauses, coughing, empty space, or repetitive language, enhancing the professional quality of each episode. Following the editing process, I began to upload my content onto *Anchor fm*, an online audio application that allows you to upload podcasting content, and then distributes your content onto multiple listening platforms, simplifying the podcasting process.

Once my podcast became live to the public, I began working on advertising strategies, to ensure *She Se Puede* content was reaching listeners. My first form of advertisement was creating a social media account for *She Se Puede* on Instagram, and from that account, I began to follow all of my guests, personal circle, peers, and so on. The power of social media is very significant today and I knew that in order for *She Se Puede* to be visible to the public, I must begin there. KUSF was also kind enough to promote *She Se Puede* by posting the link of the podcast onto their public website. I then contacted different school districts and after-school programs throughout the Bay Area (See Introduction for specifics), sending them the link to the podcast to share with their students. I was adamant on reaching out to the youth, as the content throughout this podcast can be very beneficial to the younger generation. By these women sharing their personal experiences and showing the career possibilities and triumphs that are

achievable, can possibly help the younger generation and their career aspirations. I also informed my own community, peers, and personal connections on spreading the word of *She Se Puede*, as word of mouth communication has been successful for me in the past. I was lucky enough to have a great support system and network that helped promote this podcast just as much as I have and received great feedback from listeners.

After publicly publishing my Podcast on April 1st, 2020 and creating a public instagram page for *She Se Puede*, I have received numerous messages from listeners expressing their interest and appreciation for the content the podcast shares, as well as many listeners sharing that they can relate to many of these stories. I have been uploading one episode a week, to not overwhelm listeners with content, allowing them to stay on track and up to date with future episodes. Through the application Anchor Fm, I am able to track the amount of times an episode has been played, the demographics of my audience and my overall audience size. To my excitement, *She Se Puede* has reached over 500 plays with an overall audience size of 65 listeners, with 80% of the audience identifying as women. My hope is for these numbers to increase and that these stories reach more people and help anyone who may need some inspiration.

3.2 Scholarly Research -

Although the interviews I conducted were my main research focus , I also used secondary scholarship to further expand on the historical patterns of career development of Latinas. In addition to utilizing online databases, I was also referred to multiple pieces of literature from my advisor and professors. Implementing past research on the subject strengthened my overall research process and aided in analyzing the change in

professional mobility which Latinas have historically experienced. I then analyzed the content from the interviews and compared their stories and experiences to the literary research by noting common themes and connections regarding the professional advancement of Latinas. All of this information can be found in the Literature review section of this thesis paper.

CHAPTER 4

4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION-

After completing my first interview, I knew this podcast and the stories it would share were going to be very powerful, especially towards the Latinx community. The diversity of these women, in regards to their professional backgrounds and experience, was essential to this project, although they held many similarities in how they express their identities. The power of storytelling was the greatest form of research undertaken throughout this project, as hearing first-hand the experiences and backgrounds these women held made it clear that their biggest struggles and triumphs intertwined with one another. We all want to be heard, and connecting to one another through shared experiences can have a great impact on professional development, allowing an individual to see themselves in someone else's story.

The discussions I had with each guest seemed to bring up similar themes and connections, although each woman has a different story, their shared commonality of identifying as a Latina was transparent. Some commonalities each interviewee had were through their life experiences such as; being a child of immigrants and the hard working mentality and hustle that comes with it, translating for their parents as children and the importance of community in their lives. Throughout the following section, I will be

exploring common themes that emerged in my interviews and will describe the women who brought *She Se Puede* to life.

4.1 Children of Immigrants/First Generation Hustle:

All of my interviewees are either immigrants or first generation and expressed how being the first to have more opportunities in the United States has affected their work ethic tremendously. Michelle Rodriguez, a senior manager and the team-lead for diversity, inclusion and belonging at LinkedIn discusses her experience with being a child of immigrants, “I’m a daughter of immigrants. My dad is from Mexico, my mom is from El Salvador and I feel like being that first generation gives you a certain grit and hustle” (Michelle Rodriguez: 2020). Michelle shared how she grew up spending her summers cleaning houses with her mom, and that her parents would tell her that when she is older, no matter what she pursued, she was going to be a professional. Michelle also touched on her mother's high hopes for her, not in any specific line of work but just in the general realm of professionalism, “Yes definitely, since I was little, my mom always told me I’m going to be a professional, whatever that may be” (Michelle Rodriguez: 2020). Michelle always had a strong support system through her parents, encouraging her that she could be anything she put her mind to. This was a very similar pattern in most interviewees, having an overwhelming amount of support from their families while pursuing a higher education and throughout their professional journeys.

Zeyda Garcia, a Xicana educator and therapist elaborates on her passion for mental health and taking care of the youth and relates that to her upbringing. “[I am] First

generation, both of my parents immigrated from Mexico, I believe my personal identity stems from that” (Zeyda Garcia: 2019). Zeyda, like many of the guests on *She Se Puede*, is first generation. She discusses how coming from immigrant parents truly played a part in shaping her personal identity and the responsibility that comes with it. She discussed how values that were instilled by her parents as a child later helped her find a career path she was passionate about, “I think having a strong sense of identity, of who I am, my beliefs and values helps. It helps align the work that I do, it allows me to be driven and focused on what I want to accomplish” (Zeyda Garcia: 2019). Zeyda portrays her Latina identity in all spaces, she wants to live authentically in her workplace allowing the people around her to truly understand the person she is.

While none of the interviewees were encouraged to pursue a set field or occupation, pursuing a higher education was almost always encouraged by someone in their lives. Zeyda shared how she had a lot of internalized expectations for herself while growing up, She said, “My parents sacrificed so much coming to this country, sometimes working two to three jobs and I felt like this is how I was repaying them. Internalized expectations for myself, that were generational” (Zeyda Garcia: 2019). She felt pursuing a degree in college was the best way to express how thankful she was for everything her parents gave her. We discussed how your education is one thing that can never be taken away, knowledge is power and can be utilized in any aspect of life.

Gabriela Lopez and educator and Vice President on the San Francisco Board of Education discussed how identifying as a first generation Latina shaped her identity as an educator since she was a child. “I’m from LA, my parents are from Mexico and what

sparked my interest in education is that my parents could not communicate with any one of my teachers” (Gabriela Lopez: 2020). Gabriela discusses her frustrations of not having any teachers that could communicate with her parents, so being a bilingual educator gives her the advantage of personally connecting with a wider range of the families which she serves.

Rocio Rivera owns her own photography business, beginning her passion for photography by chance, taking a class in high school that changed her future. She is also a child of parents who immigrated from Mexico, she shared how both her parents work in the fruit fields of Napa Valley and she always makes sure that her parents are educated on their labor rights, helping them with whatever paperwork or questions regarding their employment. She incorporates her Latinidad through her work and connecting to clients that resonate with the Latinx community, by speaking Spanish she is able to connect with clients in their native language, allowing her Latinx clients to feel more comfortable while shooting, while a majority of the artwork she sells are photos and prints taken in her home country of Mexico.

While education was a clear expectation for most interviewees, there were similar experiences regarding “working hard” regardless of what you are doing professionally. The concept of “giving it your all,” was something that all interviewees connected with, being first generation or immigrants themselves. Mariana Gonzalez, a tech recruiter at Twitter, shared how her father did not care what she pursued professionally, as long as she put in the effort, she explains here:

One thing my dad always did say, is I don't care if you are like a janitor, but I want you to be the best janitor there is, and I still think of that to this day. Whatever you are, echale ganas, you know give it your all. (Mariana Gonzalez: 2019)

Mariana, like many of the interviewees, agreed that being a child of immigrants gives you a certain grit, a first generation grind instilled in them. Wanting to ensure that they are able to fulfill any dreams that their parents may have had for them when coming to the U.S and the opportunities they hoped to give their children.

Valentina Marrufo, a social worker and small business owner of her apparel brand Mission Native, also expressed how lucky she believes she is, with the abundance of support she received from her immediate family and husband while completing her two degrees, she discusses the abundance of support she receive from her family:

My dad is also a huge supporter, he was my reason, both of my parents... mi papa would always tell me, I didn't come here for you guys to suffer. You're smart and you could be anything you wanted to be. (Valentina Marrufo: 2020)

Valentina's parents immigrated to the U.S from Mexico and stressed to their children that they wanted them to live life comfortably and not have to struggle to survive. Now that her parents are no longer with us, she still lives her daily life in hopes of making them proud. She shared how her parents struggled and sacrificed in order for their children to have ample opportunities in the United States. It is clear that each individual has had different experiences, though each of these stories differ there seems to be a similarity in relation to their work ethic and being a child of immigrants. All interviewees resonated

with the concept of their Latina identities bearing significant impact on their professional and academic goals, and their cultural backgrounds strengthening their diligence in the workforce.

4.2 Translating for Parents:

Valentina Marrufo is a social worker for the city and county of San Francisco and a small business owner. Born and raised in the Mission district to parents who immigrated from Mexico, she is inspired by her Mexican culture and implements it into her everyday life, both personally and professionally. Valentina started pursuing her degree in social work ten years after graduating from high school, and shared how it was intimidating being older than other students, but knew it was what she needed to do:

Looking back I've been a social worker all my life, as far as reading documents for people, referring them to places, looking up agencies. I have been fully bilingual in English and Spanish by the age of three. Both my parents came from Guadalajara Mexico and didn't speak any English. (Valentina Marrufo: 2020)

Valentina started practicing social work as a child, this being a similar experience to many of my guests, having to professionally help and speak to people on your parents behalf. Going straight to the workforce after high school, initially starting with a medical billing job then transitioning to new positions that were always in the medical field. It took ten years and seeing new hires with no experience getting paid much more due to their degrees, which led her to realize that in order to move up and expand her career, she needed to go back to school. Starting her college career at thirty she now obtains two

degrees in social work. On top of being a social worker, Valentina created Mission Native, her own apparel company that portrays the Mission District's pride and the Latinidad that comes with it. Mission Native was created to embrace the Latinx culture of the Mission District, although Valentina is now a displaced Mission Native due to gentrification and the high cost of living she wanted to pay homage to her beloved neighborhood.

Valentina loves to serve her community both through her professional work as well as with her small business, which is similar to my next guest Melisa. While recruiting for the podcast I wanted to ensure that I included a guest from the medical field, being that the Latinx community in the medical field is extremely underrepresented with only about 6% of physicians identifying as Latinx in the United States. Melisa Bonilla-Garcia is a registered nurse in the San Francisco Bay Area. She immigrated to the US from Mexico at the age of three and knew from a very young age that she wanted to become a nurse. Her Latina identity played a role in this decision, as she explains here:

...being Latina and going to the doctors with my parents as a child, and my parents not being able to communicate easily with hospital staff. That was an eye opener, with paperwork and simple questions, I was having to interpret for my parents and help them with paperwork starting at the age of 9. (Melisa Bonilla-Garcia: 2020)

Melisa, like many other of the women interviewed, had a critical responsibility of translating for her parents, filling out medical paperwork and professional documents at a very young age. Holding this responsibility as a child encouraged her to pursue a degree

in nursing, as she knew that being a bilingual nurse would enable her to communicate with her patients. She shares her experiences with the difficulties her parents faced with medical care, “I learned how to advocate for my parents at a very young age, I can tell the care that was given to people who did not speak English was not the same, this made me very passionate about getting into the medical field” (Melisa Bonilla- Garcia: 2020). She shared how her negative experiences in the medical field as a child led her to pursue a career in medicine as an adult, she wanted to make it easier for the Latinx community to receive proper care. Melisa expresses how she believes she has exceeded the expectations and dreams her parents had while immigrating to the United States. Her parents wanted her to have ample opportunities when moving to the United States, “Once I started going to community college and started winning awards and being recognized that's when they were like oh she means business. When I transferred to USF they were so happy, they definitely had dreams but were almost shocked when it happened” (Melisa Bonilla-Garcia: 2020). Melisa, like many of the interviewees, were given new opportunities when their parents decided to immigrate to the U.S and these women took full advantage of these opportunities by pursuing a higher education and working towards advancing professionally.

4.3 Importance of Community:

Amber Gonzalez-Vargas is the senior program manager at the Latino Community Foundation, whose mission is to invest in Latino-led organizations and increase political participation for Latinos in California. She was raised in the Central Valley of California to parents who immigrated from Peru. Growing up Amber developed a passion for

encouraging others to pursue their dreams, something she learned from her mother. She has always had a passion for uplifting others in her community and has brought this passion into adulthood,

For me the word that comes to mind in every aspect of my life is Guerrero (Warrior), both in my professional life and also in my personal identity. What that means to me is really being a fighter, and advocate for myself, an advocate for my family, and an advocate for my community. (Amber Gonzalez-Vargas:2020)

Amber has been in the workforce for about 8 years now and is on a mission to mobilize the energy and talent of the Latinx community to create a more equitable society.

Amber encourages the Latinx community to explore the world of philanthropy, by trying to promote the representation of the Latinx community through generous donations and volunteer work, in hopes of bringing up the community by helping fund Latinx-owned non-profits and businesses.

Kassandra Pintor is an artist with big dreams; as a San Francisco native, she creates paintings, murals and other art pieces that fight the gentrification of her beloved city, she has many ideas of where she wants to take her art in the future, she shares here:

I hope to one day open up my own cafe in the city of San Francisco and use that platform to help other SF natives or any kind of local artists to display their art... and with that cafe I would like to open up a resource center were Latinas or any kid can come and get help, resources, go to college. (Kassandra Pintor: 2019)

Kassandra touches on sensitive subjects through her art, from immigration to the gentrification that is greatly affecting the Latinx community in San Francisco. Kassandra

takes great pride in being a San Francisco Native and wants to express the diversity the city has to offer through her art. She believes that hosting free art shows for the community can bring people together and contribute towards keeping the Latinx culture present in the city. She hopes that her art can be a form of inspiration for other young artists who are trying to follow their dreams.

Despite the different positions these women held, all seemed connected to their cultural backgrounds and the communities which they serve. Zeyda Garcia, a part time school counseling professor at the University of San Francisco, focuses on uplifting the Latinx community through her work in the mental health sector. “My identity is very intersectional, I feel like my work and my professional identity is rooted in who I am and the love for my people, the love for youth and just the love for wellness and making sure everyone is okay” (Zeyda Garcia: 2019). Zeyda expresses her passion of serving the youth and giving back to the community through her work.

Another guest on the podcast that identifies as an educator is Commissioner Gabriela Lopez. Gabriela is the Vice President on the San Francisco board of education, and the youngest elected official in San Francisco history, at the age of 29. Before beginning her campaign, Gabriela taught fourth grade for 4 years, and she strongly identifies as an educator who is passionate about taking care of our youth. “I identify as a teacher, that's my profession, that's my life. I've been very observant even as a child, about educational spaces and the fact that I went to a pretty affluent school that had no latinos present” (Gabriela Lopez: 2020). On top of being an educator, Gabriela is clearly involved in San Francisco politics and fights towards equitable access to voting rights.

Both Gabriela Lopez and Zeyda Garcia shared their similar passions for serving the youth and how their Latina identities are very present in the work that they do.

Mariana Gonzalez, a professional in the tech industry, touched on the difficulty she has faced while trying to increase the representation of the Latinx community in the tech industry. “It’s not necessarily easy being the only Latina in the room, the only Latina in the meeting, but this has been something I have definitely experienced before and I believe it is my responsibility to help increase the representations of Latinos in tech” (Mariana Gonzalez:2020). Mariana reflected on her time in the tech industry and how she rarely comes across people from the Latinx community. Like many of the interviewees, she believed that it was her responsibility to represent and embrace her Latina identity through her work.

Valentina Marrufo expressed how being a social worker, she has to connect to the community around her in order to make a difference. When asked how her Latina identity has affected her professional advancement, she stated: “When I think of that question what comes to mind is my community, how being a Latina, being bicultural, being bilingual [...] has helped me to serve my community. I think it is a huge strength and something that I am proud of” (Valentina Marrufo: 2020). Valentina, like many other guests on *She Se Puede*, has experienced the struggle of being the sole Latina in a work environment; regardless, she perceives her Latina identity as a strength. The diversity in the workforce that these women create, gives them an advantage in connecting to other cultures within the people they serve.

Michell Rodriguez, a Senior Manager at LinkedIn discusses her passion for empowering diverse groups and ensuring that their voice is heard, “I always think of culture, I consider myself a culture shaper, whatever company I’m in, or role I’m in, I think how can I leave this place better than I found it? I’m really attracted to roles impacting people, impacting inclusive cultures and workplaces” (Michelle Rodriguez: 2020). Michelle, like many of the interviewees, shared how she strives in fighting towards cultural equity in the workplace, she explained how she wants underrepresented groups to not only work in tech but also for their opinions and input to be heard in the workplace. She believes having round table discussions, and ensuring different cultures are present while making company wide decisions is extremely important.

Ana Lievano, is a young professional still figuring out her career goals. She immigrated to the U.S at a young age, with few instruction on how to strive professionally, she has been able to move away from her hometown, obtain a college degree and begin her professional journey. She strives to empower the Latinx community and talk about the inequities that effect her people, she shares below how she connects with her community:

I do a lot of community conversations and engagements. I host seminars and webinars that relate to conversations about justice, trauma, and imposter syndrome. I believe having these conversations and engaging people in these conversations is how I'm doing my part. (Ana Lievano: 2020)

Ana is a young adult still trying to truly define her professional identity; she has made significant career changes and has had negative experiences in the workforce, but hopes

that expanding her network and exploring new career paths will bring her new opportunities that do not diminish her mental health. She shares her experiences and holds community conversations, because she believes that publicly discussing these major inequities and issues in the workforce can potentially lead to action, like addressing the pay gap and addressing other workplace issues with supervisors. Ana is a young Latina who strives to make a difference in her everyday work, while working towards developing her career, and she hopes to bring other women of diversity with her.

4.4 Professional Advancement-

The professional advancement of women in the workforce has always been difficult, this inequity is even higher for women of diversity, with Latinas being the lowest paid group, earning roughly 61% compared to her male counterparts. While interviewing my guests, I wanted to discuss the subject of professional advancement based on their Latinx identities. The responses were mixed; although some had negative experiences, such as feeling that they were not hired due to their physical looks, or feeling uncomfortable while being the only Latina or woman in a meeting, they all felt strongly about embracing their Latinx identities in whatever professional space they are immersed in.

While going through the interview process for a new job, Zeyda Garcia, an educator and therapist, was confident that she was the most experienced candidate for a position, compared to other applicants. She did not receive the position, and felt she was discriminated against, based on her Latina identity, as compared to all other employees at that company. This was a teaching position at a school that seemed to have a lack of

diversity in their teaching staff, many employees being white males. “Given the way we look at gender, race and class and the biases we hold, maybe their internalized beliefs on what a professional might look like in this setting, limited my advancement” (Zeyda Garcia: 2020). Zeyda believes there are many unspoken biases in the workforce and that people of diversity and women are usually the ones who end up struggling while trying to advance professionally.

Every woman interviewed is openly proud of their Latinidad, they bring their full selves to the table both personally and professionally and embrace their culture. A feeling of responsibility was present within all these women to help other Latinas grow. “ When Latinas become more bold and vocal they can represent the rest of us, we’re given this opportunity and given this voice and I think we should use it and speak for the generations before us” (Kassandra Pintor:2020). Kassandra Pintor, an artist, touches on her experience with Latinas being behind the scenes, the machismo culture and the toxic masculinity that comes with it, which continues to impact the Latinx culture and makes it more difficult for some women to advance professionally, due to their families needs in the home.

All guests on *She Se Puede* carry pride of their Latina identity and have pursued careers that in one way or another express that pride. After graduating college, Amber Gonzalez- Vargas, a senior program manager at the Latino community Foundation, felt lost in what she wanted to work towards in her career. She had to dig deeper into her identity and what she felt would fulfill her professional aspirations. “What is really centering for me is being rooted in my identity, so I asked myself the question, okay

Amber, what is the identity that you feel most powerful and the most strong in today, and that was being Latina, being Peruana” (Amber Gonzalez-Vargas: 2020). Amber’s Latina identity, and being able to work towards lifting up the Latinx community in her everyday work. As a senior program manager at the Latino Community Foundation she leads the Latino giving Circles raising donations to fund Latinx led non profits across California as well as the Latino nonprofit accelerator that gives grassroots nonprofits the boost they need to grow, through branding and fundraising. She expressed how she feels very lucky that she is able to advance professionally in a work environment that uplifts the Latinx community.

4.5 Discrimination-

Discrimination towards the Latinx community is not new, immigrants in the United States have experienced discrimination and inequitable professional opportunities for as long as this country has existed. Today, with the current political administration, we have seen a spike in discriminatory actions against the Latinx community, especially the Mexican community after the Trump administration began expressing an anti immigrant rhetoric. Not only is there a professional barrier with identifying as a woman in this country, but being a woman of diversity increases that inequity in advancing professionally. Throughout this section, I will share the experiences these women have been through in regards to discrimination and their Latina identities.

Mariana Gonzalez, a tech recruiter at Twitter, is part of multiple organizations that cater to the Latina community in the Bay Area and focus on closing the pay gap and addressing inequities in the workforce. “I know Latinas get paid the lowest out of

everyone, so I know...inherently that being a woman and being Latina, I am treated unfairly in certain aspects. I fall into this category that generally faces inequities" (Mariana Gonzalez:2020). Mariana is aware that she is part of a community that faces inequities daily, and shares how her work in the tech industry and the platform she is given allow her to fight against these inequities placed upon the Latinx community. As a recruiter she strives for diversity in hiring new employees, she also hosts workshops for women of diversity in tech that consist of addressing the pay gap, workplace harassment and other obstacles many women face in the workforce.

Michelle Roriguez, a senior manager at LinkedIn, has been mistaken for a service worker in her work cafeteria multiple times; growing up with a mother who was a service worker, she holds great respect for those who are considered to be at the bottom of the professional ladder. Although she was extremely offended in these encounters, she now believes that she reacts to these situations in a more composed manner, rather than with anger. "Microaggressions add up over time, but now I think I'm at a place in my life that I am more fiesty and ready to react to situations of discrimination, but sometimes it's just jarring" (Michelle Rodriguez: 2020). Michelle shared how when she was younger she would react to these situations much differently than she does now, since she has built up her professional identity, she believes she can address these people in a more stable manner. By taking a stance and expressing her frustrations calmly, and how assumptions such as these can be harmful and very offensive to one's identity.

Feeling underestimated in the workplace has been a common experience with my interviewees. Valentina Marrufo, a social worker and small business owner, has felt on

many occasions that she was not taken seriously in the workforce. Like many women, she has experienced a feeling of belittlement while trying to express her opinions on a work-related matter, she states here:

I have felt that either my opinion wasn't as important as someone else's, because this person is a director of such and such or a male or from a different ethnic background than me. Those are things that may not be said to your face, but trust and believe that energy is real and you feel it, you hear the dismissive tone in a voice. (Valentina Marrufo: 2020)

Valentina has professional experience expanding over two decades, she has two degrees in social work and owns her own small business, an apparel company called Mission Native, yet she still believes that she experiences discrimination in the work place, as stated in the quote above. Valentina shared how being a part of a group that experiences inequities on a daily basis is frustrating and can hinder your confidence, feeling like your voice isn't being heard can take a toll on one's personal growth and professional advancement. Valentina shared how she is very assertive when taking part in a professional setting, and she wants people in the room to acknowledge her opinions and experience.

Lastly, one common experience of discrimination was the protection from their parents. Amber Gonzalez- Vargas believed that her parents tried to shield her from any experiences of discrimination as a child as much as possible. Obviously, when a child grows up, it is impossible to shield them from the outside world. "My parents have tried their whole lives to shield me from ever experiencing discrimination, so it wasn't until I

was older that I became aware” (Amber Gonzalez-Vargas:2020). Amber explained how coming from Peruvian descent, she felt that she had a different experience than the Latinx community that identifies as Mexican. She shared how when sharing that her family was from Peru many people responded with, “Wow how exotic, or I love Macchu Picchu!” while her friends who are Mexican did not receive those same responses or interest when sharing their nationalities. She shares how she experienced people within the Latinx community being treated differently based on race, colorism and nationalities. Racism is multilayered and deeply rooted in our society, and I want to stress how the Latinx community is extremely diverse within itself.

4.6 Professional Expectations-

Professional expectations for children is something that seems to differ across cultures. While interviewing for *She Se Puede*, I wanted to consider any expectations they were given while growing up, and how, or if, they were supported through their personal/professional journeys. It is unfortunate that there are many careers that are not taken seriously by some parents and our society at large, based on the level of income. This is very relevant to those who pursue a career in art or a related field. Rocio, who now owns her own photography company, shared that it was difficult for her parents to accept her decision not to go to college and to pursue a career in photography instead, she shares the obstacles she had to overcome regarding her family and their expectations:

Some of the obstacles that I had were my parents, like I said before they didn’t really believe in it. That was one of my biggest obstacles. I had to prove to them

that art is okay, I don't need to go to school in order for me to have a career set.

(Rocio Rivera: 2019)

Rocio shared how her parents did not have a lot of confidence in her career, thinking that she would not be able to support herself financially if she decided to take this route. She had to explain to her parents many times that her passion for photography was going to pay off, and to her parents' surprise, Rocio is now a very well-known and successful photographer in the Bay Area with growing clientele.

Kassandra Pintor a native San Francisco artist, had a very similar experience with her art; although she does not financially depend on her art, she found it very difficult to receive support from her family. Kassandra has spent much of her own money hosting art shows and creating new pieces to showcase, and although she does not make a lot of income from these shows, she believes that it is important for the community in which she serves. She shares how it took a long time to receive support from her family, her passion for art was not necessarily taken seriously as she shares here, "I didn't have a lot of support from my family because they saw it as more of a hobby, and art is all I wanted to do" (Kassandra Pintor: 2019). Now Kassandra's family has shown more support in her passion for art, and realized that her artistic talent is much more than just a hobby.

She shared how after her parents attended her first big art show they understood the dedication and passion she has for her art, and realized that the work she puts into her art is serious. Kassandra is now pursuing a career in the tech industry, she believes her educational background in statistics will help her begin this new career path while continuing her art work. Although Kassandra is now pursuing a career in the tech

industry, she plans to continue incorporating her art into all aspects of her life, by using her career in tech to help fund her art shows as well as possible collaborations in the tech world. Cassandra shared that the lack of support from home when growing up led her to make connections and receive mentorship from other Latina artists in San Francisco. She expressed how thankful she is for the mentorship and encouragement she was able to receive when growing up and practicing art. It took time for these two women to gain support from their families while pursuing their artistic careers.

In contrast to these experiences, all other women on *She Se Puede* shared that they received full support from their parents and family throughout their professional and academic journeys. As well as support outside of their immediate families from teachers, mentors, friends and colleagues. Ana Lievano, discussed how she is extremely grateful in always receiving support from her mother, she shared that although there were difficult times growing up in a single parent household, her mother always encouraged and supported her to follow her dreams, she discusses her support system below:

My mom, it's really important to build a support system for yourself, but my mom and my family have been a huge support. No matter what I decide to do, my mother is always there to support me, but I know that's not always the case. (Ana Lievano: 2020)

Although Ana's mother did not have any specific expectations for her academically or professionally, she always offered her full support. Growing up in a single parent household and being the eldest child, Ana shared how, from a young age, she always felt like she had a significant responsibility to help support her family. Although she is

extremely grateful for the support she receives from her mother, she is also thankful for the mentors she had while growing up, especially her teachers who pushed her to pursue a higher education and the overall impact on the major life decisions she made.

4.7 Mentorship-

Another subject that was discussed in all interviews was the concept of mentorship and how these women are helping other Latinas through their volunteer work, informal meetings and overall advice to the younger generations. Many of the women interviewed have mentees that they help professionally, while others plan to give back to the community in the future, for example by volunteering at different youth services centers, or through other forms of community outreach. Whether or not they currently have mentees, all the women interviewees perceive themselves as role models for their families and the community in which they serve. Regardless of their professional identities, they bring their Latinx pride to every environment they work in and strive to help women of diversity through their formal and informal mentorships.

Zeyda Garcia, an educator and therapist has shared how she intentionally applies to jobs that involve working with the Latinx community and people of diversity, because she wants her students and clients to be able to connect with her on a cultural level. She states how she makes it clear that she is a woman of color and always strives to bring her authentic self to the workplace, she touches on being authentic in the workplace below:

I'm also very intentional, of not only being a woman of color, but being a woman of color who strongly identifies as that. Strongly identifies with her background

and her roots. There might be some folks who go into a profession and may not want to display all of that because that's what society tells us, however I am all about being who you are and being authentic, unapologetic about who you are.

(Zeyda Garcia: 2019)

Zeyda serves the Latinx community and other communities of diversity through her everyday work, as a graduate level professor at the University of San Francisco and a mental health professional, focusing on family therapy she wants to uplift and empower these communities through mental health care and education. She believes that being able to communicate and connect with the community she serves offers her a platform to be a mentor for the youth.

Gabriela Lopez, who is also an educator and Vice President of the San Francisco Board of Education, feels the same way, in regards to relatability and connecting with her students. Being a bilingual educator, Gabriela believes that being able to communicate with many of her students and parents helps strengthen students' confidence and eagerness to learn. "I want to be a teacher that students can relate to...so that they know the person who is guiding them to be a good person also understands their experiences and looks like them" (Gabriela Lopez: 2020). She experienced struggles as a student in regards to language barriers that existed between her teachers and parents. Her ability to connect with her students culturally has helped her tremendously improve her teaching skills and make the learning environment more comfortable for her students.

Michelle Rodriguez, a senior manager at LinkedIn working in the Diversity & Inclusion sector, addressed her mentorship experiences and her perception of herself as a

role model for other women of diversity. She has a handful of mentees who have all reached out to her via LinkedIn, and whom she guides professionally, offering any type of advice she can. She stresses how we should all take responsibility in helping the younger generation, she states below:

I hope I can be a role model in a sense that you can be a working mother that loves her job, you can be a first generation who really loves their culture but also unlearns some things that maybe don't serve you anymore. (Michelle Rodriguez: 2020)

She is proud of her Latina identity and wants to empower women, and help others find their voice, especially in the workforce. All women on *She Se Puede* podcast have made an effort to mentor other young Latinas, whether that be someone in their family, or a complete stranger. Michelle shared how she believes that if you have the opportunity to help others do not hold back, because sharing ones struggles can potentially help others from going through the same situation, “Be the person your younger self needed” (Michelle Rodriguez: 2020). Michelle summed up all of our conversations in the prior quote; in order for a group to grow, and the Latinx community to begin occupying new roles, there needs to be a collective effort by the community. Simply helping one another and mentoring our youth seems to be a great way to start.

4.8 Creating Change-

Women of diversity have had to overcome organizational obstacles for generations, and there are still inequities in the workforce that make it extremely difficult for Latinas to occupy many professional spaces. In this section, I will be providing many

direct statements from the interviewees, as I do not believe I can articulate their views in my own words with justice. With the conclusion of each interview, I asked the question, *Do you feel that you are creating change for Latinas in the workforce?* This question seemed to take some time for each interviewee to respond, but with some reflection, every single woman believed they are creating change one way or another. They hope that their stories and mentorship can help uplift the younger generation of Latinas that are next in line, Michelle hopes to lead the way for future generation of Latinas in the workforce as she shares here:

I really do hope so, I aspire to say yes. I say that because I truly believe that part of my purpose is making space where there hasn't been space before. I want to make sure the path for other Latinas is easier, it's more accessible. (Michelle Rodriguez: 2020)

Michelle has expressed throughout her interview that she aspires to be uplifting to the community in which she serves, her work environment especially. In her work with diversity & inclusion, she strives to provide an inclusive environment within her team, and wants everyone's voice to be heard and opinions to be considered in any collective decision that needs to be made. Michelle takes pride in being a daughter of immigrants and brings her Latina identity to all aspects of her life, hoping that her story can help inspire other underrepresented groups.

Valentina Marrufo serves the Latinx community through both her professional identities, as a social worker and small business owner. She hopes that lifting the Latinx community through her work can make a change in others' lives, she shares below:

I think that creating change is living outside of others' expectations. I already feel like I am there, I did it. Again, being able to reach other people, through something like this, through storytelling... giving someone else the chance to believe that they can also be that change. (Valentina Marrufo: 2020)

As I previously mentioned, the power of storytelling was discussed in many interviews and Valentina's story can hopefully uplift and inspire other women who may have had a similar experience, such as pursuing a higher education later in life compared to right out of highschool. Starting college in your thirties could be intimidating, creating your own business could be intimidating, but being able to hear someone who was able to overcome these obstacles, could bring hopefulness to one's dreams. Valentina holds a strong connection to her Mexican culture and is fighting for the Latinx community in San Francisco through her work in the Mission District. Valentina expresses love for the Mission District through her small apparel company Mission Native, she hopes to inspire people to be prideful of where they come from and fight for the Latinx community that is being exposed to gentrification.

Gabriela Lopez has a direct impact on the youth, being an educator and on the board of education for San Francisco. She stresses the importance of educating our youth, and catering to all children, regardless of their gender, culture or socioeconomic status. She believes that she is creating change by occupying space that is rarely taken by women of diversity, she expresses her thoughts below:

I think just being in the space that we are normally almost not allowed to be in, is what we have been asking for and that is going to happen. This is just the

beginning... I have met so many other women that truly inspire me and help keep me going. (Gabriela Lopez: 2020)

Gabriela is the youngest elected official in San Francisco history, while also being a part of a very underrepresented group, she has broken barriers and opened doors for new generations of Latinas to walk through.

Zeyda Garcia, an educator and therapist, has previously stated how she brings her “full self” and all aspects of her identity to her work environment; further, she wants to make others comfortable in their own identities through the work she does with underrepresented groups in the education field. We discussed how you can truly see when an individual is passionate about the work they do and the change they are creating, she shares how this inspires her and the work that she does:

Seeing folks that look like you in settings that you might not see often, seeing folks of color in the Education field who are really about their work and the people they are serving and social justice and bringing up issues of inequity. That's really been inspiring to me and helped shape me into the educator, therapist and all of the above that encompass who I am. (Zeyda Garcia: 2019)

Zeyda discussed how she gains inspiration from the people that are around her, when seeing other people of diversity in the education field who are passionate about their work. She believes that she is creating change by taking up space in the education field and connecting to the youth. Zeyda is an advocate for the youth, Latinx community and other underrepresented groups and hopes that she is helping create a path for other young Latinas to take up space and diversify the United States workforce.

Amber, working in the world of philanthropy, makes it her mission to uplift Latinx talent and help create a more equitable society by helping raise funds for Latinx led non profits and increasing civic and political participation of the Latinx community. She believes that she is creating change through her work within the Latinx community, and is hopeful that she is making an impact for future generations to come, she shares her thoughts on creating change below:

Yes, I do. I do think so, I feel like part of the reason is because I do have intentionality behind it... I think you got to see it to believe it, I hope that everyone that you asked before me and everyone that you ask after me, that they all say yes because regardless of who we are as Latinas and how we exist, we are influencing the next generation, period. (Amber Gonzalez-Vargas: 2020)

Amber believes that all Latinas are influencing the next generation, regardless of professional titles or field of work they may be in. She is fully immersed in the Latinx community throughout the state of California, and believes that she is helping to create change in the workforce by uplifting others and mobilizing the energy and talent of the Latinx community.

Throughout this research project, I compared the experiences of each interviewee to one another and the generations that came before them. Every single interviewee is either a daughter of immigrants or an immigrant themselves, and all are first generation college students. Many of their parents are labor workers who did not reach a high level of education, some not even making it to high school. The level of education and professional status in comparison to the generation before them is dramatic, as there is a

major shift in professional identities between these ten women and their parents' generation. The Latinx community is still an underrepresented group in the United States workforce. All the women interviewed for this podcast are taking up space and creating change in the workforce, by helping uplift the Latinx community and women through their intentionality in serving underrepresented communities and taking pride in their Latina identities.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS-

When beginning this applied project, I understood that it was going to be a lot of work and commitment, especially since I do not have a tech background. I needed to educate myself on how to execute this podcast efficiently and ensure that it is easily accessible to the public. I was going to need to fully immerse myself in this project and the personal stories that I was going to be hearing, but what I did not expect was the abundance of enthusiasm and excitement that I received from every single guest of the *She Se Puede* Podcast. All guests were eager to meet and share their story once they understood the whole purpose of this podcast. *She Se Puede* Podcast was created for many reasons, the first being to empower, inspire, inform and educate the younger generation of Latinas as they embark on their professional journeys. Another was to give all audience members a cultural perspective of the Latinx community and the professional barriers and organizational obstacles that they confront. Although my research subjects only consist of ten women, I believe that their stories are extremely impactful while looking at the inequities that women of diversity face in the United States workforce. Although this research is focused in the Bay Area, the inequities that women and people of diversity face on a global perspective is showcased throughout this podcast,

with the personal stories of immigration, occupational mobility and overall responsibilities that come with identifying as a woman of diversity.

A limitation for this project was my given time frame, I was not able to interview hundreds of Latinas for my project, thus the data I collected is rather small compared to large statistical surveys of Latinas. Although I could have sent out a mass email or survey asking these questions, I do not believe the content would have been nearly as valuable as sitting down face to face with these women for hours. My goal was to take a more personal approach to these interviews and have a clear understanding and appreciation of these women's professional journeys and personal experiences. Lastly, what limited my research was the lack of scholarly research specific to the San Francisco Bay Area; although I have been able to locate literature regarding the general professional development of Latinas, there were few studies pertaining to the Bay Area. Overall, these limitations did not hinder my ability to complete this project, nor interfere with my overall goal and impact that I hoped for with this research.

The content that I received is significant to future research regarding Latinas in the workforce, and can be beneficial towards future scholarly research based in the Bay Area. I believe this research will share a more personal perspective of the professional struggles Latinas face due to the U.S economic structure and barriers that limit the professional advancement of Latinas. I would like this project to educate the public on the professional spaces Latinas are beginning to take and how the inequities the Latinx community face in the workforce is being confronted, especially by these ten women. After completing my final interview for the podcast, I realized how upset I was to not be

able to hear more stories and connect with more powerful women. I have decided to continue the *She Se Puede* podcast for as long as I can, not only for myself but for the audience and supporters that enjoy the content that *She Se Puede* has to offer. After completing my Master's degree, I plan to continue this project in hopes that it can reach more people and impact the lives of anyone who can relate.

This applied project was more successful than I anticipated, the positive feedback I received from listeners was exhilarating and as I previously stated, the overwhelming amount of enthusiasm and support I received from all the guests who brought *She Se Puede* to life made it that much more rewarding. When the idea of the *She Se Puede* Podcast was born, I did not expect this to be the outcome, yet I believe this informational and inspiring content is creating change. Whether this change be in one woman's life, or a whole underrepresented community, the power of storytelling is impactful for anyone who is willing to listen. The ability to interview and publicly share the stories of these women who strongly identify with their Latina identity has been more than impactful to my life and those who have listened. This podcast was created to keep the Latinx community inspired and to uplift women, all while showcasing influential stories of Latinas who are creating change and demonstrating what the concept of *She Se Puede* is all about.

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