



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

CHANGE THE WORLD FROM HERE

**Latina Leadership in the Nonprofit Sector:  
What can organizations do to foster an equitable and inclusive workplace?**

by

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## **Abstract**

Latinas are the fastest-growing population in the United States, and they will be one in six individuals by 2050. Despite this increase in population, Latinas continue to be absent from board rooms, executives' offices, and many leadership positions in the nonprofit sector that are in charge of making decisions that directly impact their communities. This research examines the obstacles that Latinas face when pursuing leadership positions in the nonprofit sector and offers concrete strategies for organizations to create a culture that embraces Latina leadership.

*Keywords: Latinas, Latina leadership, nonprofit sector, women of color, management*

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## Section 1. Introduction

Latinas are the fastest-growing population in the United States, and they will be one in six individuals by 2050. In California, Latinx “account for more than a third of California’s population but hold fewer than 10 percent of nonprofit executive director positions,” which makes the most underrepresented from all communities of color (De Vita & Roeger, 2009, p. 6). Despite this increase in population, Latinas continue to be absent from board rooms, executives' offices, and many leadership positions in the nonprofit sector that are in charge of making decisions that directly impact their communities. They are absent from books' pages in the leadership section of the bookstore. The researchers have forgotten them, and the articles shared by their connections on LinkedIn rarely mention their leadership styles. In the workplace, they often have to prove themselves due to the complicated intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, immigration status, age, class, and many other elements of their identities. Many who are the first in their family to navigate professional spaces feel the pressure to assimilate and adapt white, cisgender-male leadership styles to advance in their careers. The urgency to conform to traditionally white, cisgender-male standards is evident when research studies show that those who expend energy repressing themselves are more likely to say that they are being promoted more quickly. Nonprofit organizations invite Latinas to sit at the table, but they are continually reminded that it is neither their seat nor their table. Their role is to approve of an agenda created before they got there, not to shape it.

To showcase some obstacles that Latinas have to endure in their journey towards leadership in the nonprofit sector, I decided to use my *testimonio* to introduce the topic of this investigation. Testimonios are used in Latin American Cultural and Literary Studies to refer to a narration marked by the urgency to make public a situation of oppression or injustice (Forcinito, 2016, pg. 239). I believed that the intersectionality of my identities as an indigenous Puerto Rican, cisgender woman, bilingual and biliterate in Spanish-English, and the fact that I am a first-generation college graduate and professional is relevant to this research.

My journey in the nonprofit sector began upon my graduation from the University of Puerto Rico with a Bachelor's Degree in Comparative Literature, where I started navigating professional spaces for the first time without a leader who looked or sounded like me to serve as my guide. This new space had a different language, culture, and people that did not share my experiences. On a performance review early in my career, I will never forget receiving the feedback that I was "too blunt" in other words, my language did not conform to the white dominant "professional" language of the workplace. The feedback was never about my ability to perform and excel at my positions, and it always circled back to my communication style that was different from my white colleagues.

On the other hand, my Spanish language skills and ability to connect with clients were exploited by organizations. I was the go-to for translations and asked for help whenever an issue with Spanish-speakers arose without being asked first if I was comfortable with this role. As a result of being the only Spanish-speaker staff in multiple organizations, I often performed duties beyond my job description and more significant work than my colleagues but never received appropriate compensation. When I applied for internal leadership positions, I was denied on more than one occasion even though I had the skills and experiences required to excel at the job, and more importantly, I had demonstrated my commitment to the mission and clients. The candidates who ended up being hired for these promotions had less experience than me and were predominantly white. My identity was mere tokenism for these organizations to be perceived as diverse externally, and I was invited to have a seat at the table without permission to speak.

After working in the nonprofit sector for seven years, I quickly realized that my experiences are not a result of an isolated organizational problem; instead, they are deeply rooted in white supremacy culture and institutionalized racism. In an attempt to find solutions to these problems and make the nonprofit sector a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable working space for Latinas, I was inspired to choose this topic for my capstone project. This research aims to identify what strategies can be implemented on an organizational level to create a culture that embraces Latina leadership. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

- RQ1. What obstacles do Latinas face in their leadership journey in the nonprofit sector?
- RQ2. What are nonprofit organizations currently doing to advance Latinas in the workplace?
- RQ3. What strategies can be implemented on an organizational level to create a culture that embraces Latina leadership?

## **Section 2: Literature Review**

### **Barriers to Success**

Climbing the ladder towards leadership can be challenging, but it is even more complicated for Latinas when dealing with institutionalized racism, microaggressions, implicit bias, or outright discrimination on top of navigating workplace politics. While we have made progress compared to the past, Latinas are still facing many barriers in their pathway towards career advancement and leadership positions. These barriers include but are not limited to stereotypes, tokenism, being passed over or overlooked during promotions, minimum representation in governing boards and senior management positions, and lack of professional development opportunities.

## **Stereotypes In The Workplace**

For Latinas, the intersections of race and gender create particular stereotypes that profoundly shape many aspects of their lives. Latinas have to overcome stereotypes in order to forge connections with supervisors, colleagues, and influential others. These stereotypes shape not only their work experiences but also their leadership opportunities. For instance, pop culture represents Latinas "as exotic, sexual, and available, and as more in touch with their bodies and motivated by physical and sexual pleasure than white women" (Beltrán, 2002, p. 82). The historical exoticization and sexualization of Latina's bodies in the media impact how other people perceive them. As a result, Latinas have the pressure of being aware of how they show up in a space and make adjustments to their physical appearance and ways of dressing to fit into their work environments. According to a study conducted by Catalyst (2002) on Latinas in corporate management, 87 percent of the survey respondents reported maintaining a conservative style of hair and makeup, and 84 percent reported conforming to the corporate norms in dress (p. 24). The need to adjust and fit into their work environments is reinforced by the fact that those who spend a great deal of energy repressing aspects of their personas at work are more likely to strongly agree that they are being promoted quickly (Allwood & Sherbin, 2016, p.1).

Latinas live code-switching between spaces, cultures, and languages, and are misunderstood in the workplace due to their communication styles. For example, Latina's assertiveness is perceived as aggressiveness, and they are pressured by supervisors and colleagues to tone down direct communication styles (Catalyst, 2002, p. 25). However, some Latinas suffered from the opposite end of this stereotype and may be seen as submissive employees that can do whatever employers ask. These assumptions are deeply rooted on racist and patriarchal stereotypes of Latinx immigrant women which are often perceived as afraid of losing their jobs, "can afford to work for lower wages, do not mind dead-end jobs, and are better suited physiologically for particular kinds of detailed and routine work" (Lopez, 2013, p. 102).

Relating their intelligence level with their accents is another stereotype associated with communication that Latinas face in professional spaces and when trying to move forward in their leadership paths (Catalyst, 2002, p. 15). Research has shown that accents can trigger bias and negatively impact perceptions of employability, which leads to discrimination in the workplace (Deprez, S. A., & Morris, S. B., 2010, p. 419). Speakers with stronger accents were also expected to achieve lower-level occupations than those with less accented speech (Deprez, S. A., & Morris, S. B., 2010, p. 419). "In most US organizations, male, White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (MWASPs) who have a standard American English accent generally have a greater potential to influence an organization's culture than other ethnic group members. As a result, the prototypes of ideal job applicants and/or incumbents mainly reflect the values and beliefs of MWASPs" (Hosoda, Nguyen & Stone-Romero, 2012, p. 349).



## **Organizational Tokens**

Latinas are tokenized and burdened with representing the Latinx community in the workplace. Being tokenized as a Latina in the nonprofit sector can look like being the go-to staff for translation without recognizing that not all Latinas speak Spanish or asked to speak on behalf of the Latinx community without recognizing the diversity of Latin American cultures or ethnic identities in the United States. When a social identity group member is a token, it negatively shapes that person's experiences within a workgroup or an organization. "Because of their limited presence, tokens have higher visibility than dominant members, and others are more aware of them. This heightened visibility can lead to performance pressures whereby tokens may have fears about making mistakes because their performance is being heavily scrutinized" (Watkins, Simmons & Umphress, 2019, p. 347-348). The need to prove themselves pressures Latinas to take a disproportionate share of work without appropriate compensation. According to the "Race to Lead: Women of Color in the Nonprofit Sector" by Ofronama Biu (2019), 35% of Latinx women survey respondents indicated that they "often" or "always" faced the challenge and frustration of "being called on to represent a community" (p. 24). The pressure of coping with discrimination of this kind contributes to career stagnation due to the emotional stress that it creates for Latinas (Biu, 2019, p. 23).

## **Assumptions About Lack of Qualifications and Experience**

No matter the level of education and/or professional experiences, Latinas are often perceived as underqualified and inexperienced compared to white colleagues. This assumption harms Latina's career advancement because it results in them being passed over or overlooked for jobs or promotions, and getting stuck at entry-level positions. The LeanIn.Org (2019) initiative found that for every 100 men promoted to manager, only 68 Latinas are promoted. In the nonprofit sector, this creates an undeniable power dynamic, in which the board of directors and the senior executive team are mostly white, and people of color hold the entry-level or administrative positions. A participant in the Race to Lead research mentioned that this power dynamic reinforces "the narrative that all my community is good for is clean up" (Biu, 2019, p. 23). It is also essential to mention that the racial disproportion between leadership and entry-level positions is not due to people of color's lack of interest. "A key finding in the national Race to Lead report was that people of color respondents were more interested in pursuing nonprofit leadership positions than white respondents. A similar pattern was found in California, where there was a four percentage point larger gap than in the national findings between aspiring people of color and white respondents" (Kunreuther & Thomas-Breitfeld, 2019, p.8). The figure below illustrates the level of interest in taking a top leadership role among non-CEOs:

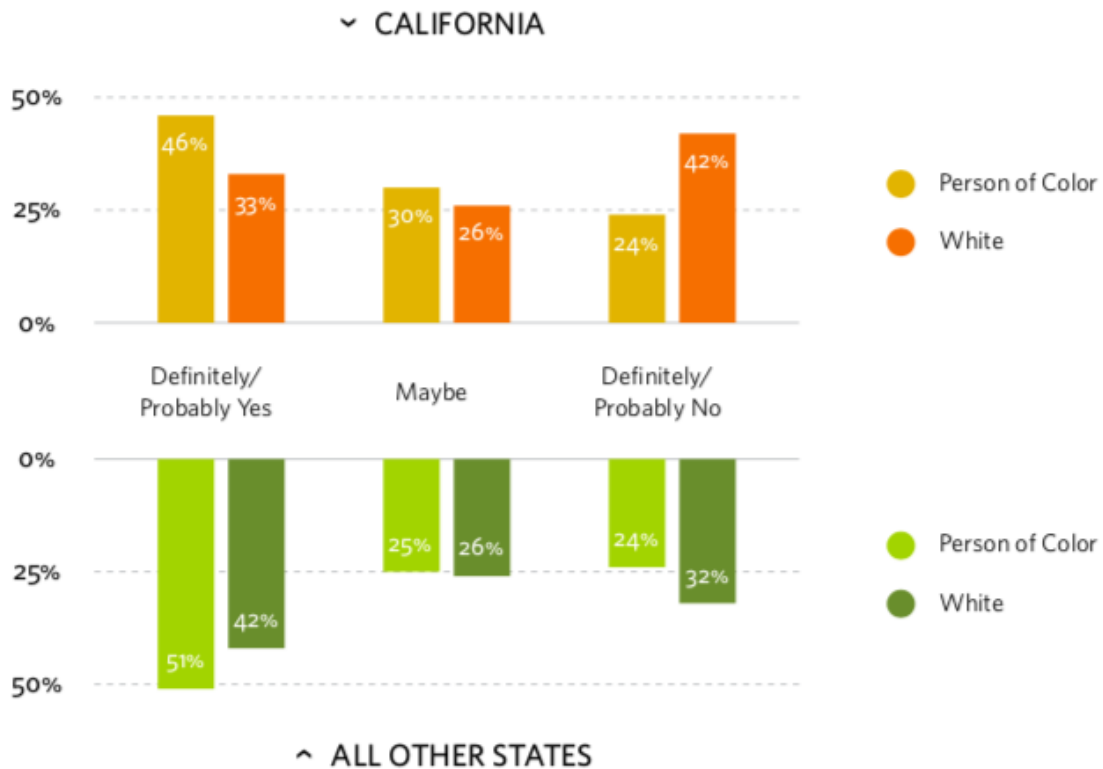


Figure 8: Level of Interest in Taking a Top Leadership Role (Among Non-CEOs)

Figure 1. Level of Interest in Taking a Top Leadership Role (Among Non-CEOs). Source: Kunreuther, F., & Thomas-Breitfeld, S. (2019) California's Race to Lead: The Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap in the Golden State. Retrieved from <https://racetolead.org/ca/>

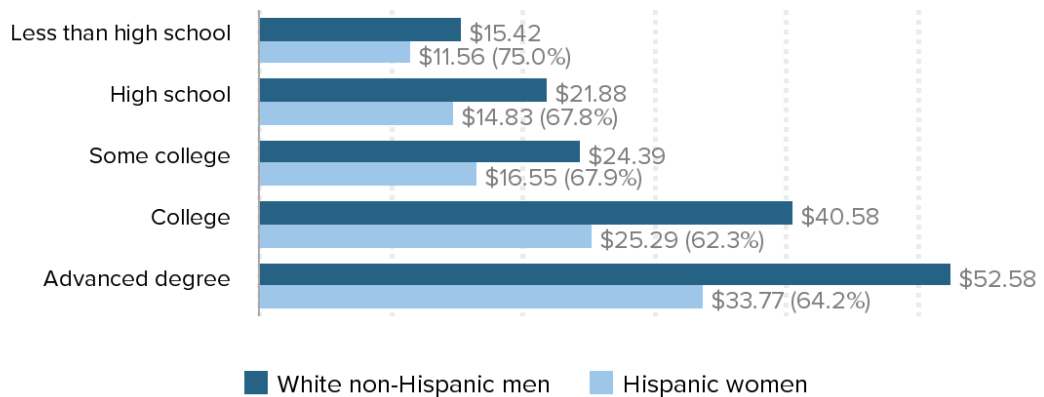
## Pay Gap

Latinx women face a double pay penalty for their ethnicity and gender. On average, Latinas in the US are paid 46% less than white men and 31% less than white women. The Latinx wealth gap continues to increase over the years, but no one is talking about it. In 2018, Latinas earned 0.53 cents for every dollar a white man earns, which means that for the fiscal year 2018, they had to work until November 20, 2019, to reach the same amount of money (Hegewisch & Tesfaselassie, 2019, p. ). "The wage gap between Latina workers and white non-Hispanic male workers persists across the wage distribution, within occupations, and among those with the same amount of education"(Gould, 2019, para. 4). The image below illustrates the average wages for Latinx women and white non-Hispanic men at different educational levels:

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## Hispanic women make less than white non-Hispanic men at every education level

Average hourly wages, by gender, race, and education, 2018



**Source:** EPI analysis of Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group microdata. For more information on the data sample, see EPI’s State of Working America [Data Library](#).

Economic Policy Institute

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Figure 2. Hispanic women make less than white non-Hispanic men at every education level. Source: Gould, E. (2019). Latina workers have to work nearly 11 months into 2019 to be paid the same as white non-Hispanic men in 2018. *Economic Policy Institute*. Retrieved in May 2020 from <https://www.epi.org/blog/latina-pay-gap-2019/>.

### What can nonprofit organizations do?

The nonprofit sector plays a crucial role in achieving social and economic justice in the world. Creating an inclusive and equitable society begins internally with the way employees are treated in nonprofit organizations, especially people of color. Nonprofit organizations have the responsibility of reflecting on their culture and policies and how they contribute to the inequalities experienced by people of color. Therefore, the last portion of the literature review will be dedicated to what nonprofit organizations can do to support Latinas and women of color in their leadership path.

### Systematic Change

Biu (2019) argued in the Race to Lead: Women of Color in the Nonprofit Sector report that the nonprofit sector needs to uncomfortably turn the lens on itself and “must make

systemic changes to ensure a fair and supportive workplace environment for all nonprofit workers, particularly for women of color”(p. 30). To create systemic change in the nonprofit sector, Bui (2019) recommended funders to increase their investments on organizations focused on and/or led by women of color because it would “help elevate the leadership, perspective, and influence of women of color across the nonprofit sector at large” (p. 30). Funders have the power of influencing nonprofit organizations to engage in racial and gender equity work. The grant application process should ask about the board of directors and staff in a format that integrates race, gender, and gender identity. Furthermore, Bui (2019) encouraged funders to demonstrate to nonprofit organizations how the diversity information provided informed their decision of accepting or not their grant application (p. 31).

Another recommended strategy to create systematic change in the nonprofit sector is to hold organizations accountable by enforcing anti-discrimination laws. Unfortunately, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the United States "has been continually underfunded, resulting in the loss of critical frontline staff and a delay for claims that has stretched to almost one year" (Bui, 2019, p.31). Advocating on behalf of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in order for them to receive the necessary funding to investigate charges of discrimination properly is a concrete way to create systematic change (Bui, 2019, p.31).

### **Organizational Culture Change**

As society has changed, the forms of prejudices and biases have become more subtle and difficult to prove that a racist act was committed (Blancero, Mouriño-Ruiz & Padilla, 2018, p. 11). These microaggressions and implicit bias are detrimental to the mental health of the targeted person. Allowing bias and discrimination to go unnoticed negatively impacts employees, but it also creates barriers for problem-solving, creativity, and innovation. The words diversity, inclusion, and equity are included in organizational values, and training focused on addressing implicit bias is on-demand, without producing actual changes in culture and policies. "Nonprofit organizations need robust and equitable human resources policies and systems that will set an expectation that racism, sexism, anti-trans bias, etc. will not be tolerated, and enforce real consequences for staff who violate those expectations" (Bui, 2019, p.31). Blancero, Mouriño-Ruiz & Padilla (2018) argued the following:

The organization and its leadership have a choice. It can accept the societal demographic changes and use it as a competitive advantage and, in turn, use inclusion and diversity as a positive strategy for organizational success or disregard the changing demographics and increasing the chances of a negative organizational brand and possible discrimination lawsuits. (p. 13)

Blancero, Mouriño-Ruiz, and Padilla (2018) also encouraged organizations, leaders, and human resources to take stock of the following things that are important for Latinx millennials in the workforce:

- It is important to recognize and celebrate the differences and uniqueness of the 21st-century Hispanic/Latino Millennial and the times we live and work in.
- It is important to understand the diversity and non-monolithic nature of the Hispanic/Latino millennial.
- Recognize and adjust to the shifting paradigm of career development within the Latino workforce and the fact that the times do not encourage employee loyalty unless the organization is able to adapt inclusivity and openness in employer-employee relations. This includes identifying strategies for engaging and retaining Latino millennials.
- As part of the cultural restructuring of the organization, accept the impact of the times that include globalization, technological explosion, and connectedness, making the world flatter and smaller.
- Understand that the demographic changes also affect Latinos' purchasing power and where and how they choose to spend their money.
- Consider how to create effective leader-employee relations that will be imperative for organizational success. Address this issue from a holistic perspective by focusing on attraction, organizational branding, recruitment, development, recognition, diversity, and retention.
- Understand the issues related to Latinos' acculturation and biculturalism, along with a possible cosmopolitanism view of the world that is becoming an important part of this generation of Latino/Hispanic millennials.
- Consider the changing need for human resources and its practices from the 20th century to a more diverse workforce in a technologically connected global society in the 21st century. (p. 16-17)

As discussed at the beginning of this literature review, Latinas are paid less than white employees. To address this obstacle in the advancement of Latinas, nonprofit organizations should pay women of color fairly and create transparency around pay scales. Transparency pay scales will expose “discrimination based on gender or race, which could lead to institutional employer remediation efforts that benefit employees” (Smit & Montag-Smit, n.d, p. 538). It will also provide Latinas with the power to make informed decisions as to whether to seek employment elsewhere or pursue a promotion with their current employer (Smit & Montag-Smit, n.d, p. 538).

### **Individual Support**

Nonprofit organizations can support Latinas' leadership path on an individual level by providing access to mentors. Making sure that Latinas have access to mentors in the workplace not only cultivates an environment where they can be their authentic selves

but also helps create a pipeline for future leaders. Mentors have the power to provide Latinas with a diverse range of advice on how they can develop as leaders and what skills they need to acquire. Catalyst (2003) found that "the lack of a mentor is the number one barrier to success for Latinas," similarly to other women of color (p. 4). As a result of a shortage of mentors, role models, and sponsors, Latinas lack access to essential networks that play a crucial role in creating opportunities to advance their careers.

Lastly, Dr. Ana Nogales (2003) encouraged Latinas to support each other by building a network of comadres (p. 13) A comadres circle can empower Latinas "to pursue their life goals, accomplish political objectives, heal from traumatic life events, and more" (Nogales, 2003, p. 13). As they excelled in their careers, mentoring others is essential to increase the pool of successful Latinas in leadership positions (Menchaca, Mills & Leo, 2016, p. 100). Mentorship by fellow comadres offers other Latinas an opportunity to acquire invaluable referrals, establish essential networking connections, advice on navigating spaces and situations, and see themselves represented in diverse positions (Menchaca, Mills & Leo, 2016, p. 100).

### **Section 3: Methods and Approaches**

This capstone project utilizes a mixed-methods research approach. It analyses both primary and secondary data resources. The secondary resources utilized in the literature review of this capstone project were retrieved online from the Gleeson Library's online database through the University of San Francisco. The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews of six Latinas working in the nonprofit sector in northern California. The mission of the organizations ranged from education to advocacy and ending family homelessness to leadership development. Different types of nonprofit organizations were also represented in this research. Two of the interviewees worked for foundations, one interviewed worked for a charter school network, one worked for a higher education institution, and the rest worked for traditional nonprofit organizations. The following leadership positions in the nonprofit sector are represented:

- Executive Director
- Interim Executive Director
- Chief Development Officer
- Director of Human Resources
- Coordinator
- Counselor

The participants in this qualitative research were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The researcher first contacted via email 20 leaders that worked in national organizations and programs supporting women and Latina

leadership. The organizations contacted by the researcher were selected from a resource guide shared by her capstone project advisor, Dr. Marco Tavanti, and created by LatinasRepresent, which is an initiative led by the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda. The purpose of the LatinasRepresent initiative is to "increase Latina participation throughout the civic engagement continuum, inspire more Latinas to seek public service opportunities and create a more reflective democracy" (LatinasRepresent, 2016). After receiving a response from two individuals out of twenty that were contacted, the researcher reached out to her network for possible introductions, and two additional participants were recruited to participate in the research. The remaining two participants were recruited, utilizing snowball sampling. At the end of each interview, the researcher asked the interviewees if they could connect her with other Latina leaders working in the nonprofit sector interested in participating in the research project.

The names of the interviewees will not be mentioned in this report to protect their privacy. It was essential for the integrity of this research that the participants felt comfortable speaking about their personal and professional experiences openly. Since this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and while following strict guidelines of social distancing and shelter in place policies, the semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom video conferencing to protect the health of the interviewees and interviewer. The guiding interview questions utilized during each interview can be found in Appendix A. The major themes and recommendations from the interviews were organized and summarized in Section 4 of this document and used to formulate recommendations in Section 5 of this research report.

### **Section 4. Data Analysis**

The tables below showcase the themes identified during the six semi-structured interviews based on the research questions presented in the introduction of this paper, and corresponding exemplar quotes from interviewees:

RQ1. What obstacles do Latinas face in their leadership journey in the nonprofit sector?	
Theme #1: White Supremacy Culture	
Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations
Boards members and senior management staff are white	"My staff members are people of color, and this creates a power dynamic when you do not have that same makeup on your board. There is much cultural sensitivity that needs to happen. My board members have different life experiences from my staff and the people we are serving, so we get a lot of implicit bias and microaggressions from

	<p>them". - Interviewee #4</p> <p>"Boards do not look and do not represent the populations that they served... board members are mostly white. Yes, I do see diversity in terms of females and males. However, there is very little Latinx representation on the board level, and those organizations are serving that population. I think that by having people from Latinx backgrounds on the board, there is a little more understanding of the challenges experienced by that population, and that is hard to explain unless you have grown in certain environments." - Interviewee #1</p> <p>"The leadership team is predominantly white, the directors are predominantly white, and associate directors are predominantly white. How is the organization creating the pipeline for leadership positions?" - Interviewee #2</p> <p>"I am super upfront with my organization about this. Why is the fact that it is all white women and white men running this organization when the people we are serving are black and brown folks? How does that make sense?" - Interviewee #6</p>
<p>White employees get promoted faster</p>	<p>"In this organization, we have a dynamic where we promote people very fast. If you look at our promotions data, it is a fact that we promote white people much faster than we promote other minorities. That is a very painful thing to accept, but it is a reality. I do not think it is because they are better than us. They might not even be skilled as a Latinx, but they show up really well. They have much confidence in themselves. They know how to sell themselves well. They just get the benefit of the doubt and get promoted. I think that we need to get people trained on the value that Latinas bring to the table and create opportunities for them to get promoted to leadership positions. And I think that we have not been intentionally doing that." - Interviewee #2</p> <p>"They were relating to all these individuals that were the same as them. Those were the ones that were being hired and promoted." - Interviewee #5</p>



Professionalism is defined by white culture	"I could be wearing hoops to a city council meeting and getting the job done simultaneously. If people are not okay with that, it is not my job to make them feel comfortable." - Interviewee #6
Latinas get paid less than their white colleagues	"...they need to pay us the amount. The fact is that Latinas make three times less than white males." - Interviewee #6
<b>Theme #2: Passed over or overlooked for job opportunities and promotions</b>	
<b>Sub Categories</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotations</b>
Assumptions about the lack of qualifications and experience	<p>"...direct services staff have so much potential to excel in a leadership position, but they are not given the opportunity because they say, oh, well, she only knows how to do the counseling part. Why should I hire her to be a Program Manager? We should hire a person with 7+ years of experience because they will know what to do. That is when we get stuck. We are like, okay, well, what do I do next? Because they are not going to hire me in the program management positions." -Interviewee #5</p> <p>"They do not have the opportunity to interact at the board level, so it is tough to generate a brand for yourself and who you are and what you bring to the table." - Interviewee #1</p>
Latinas feel pressure to prove themselves in the workplace	"Everyone else is working the same amount of time, but we have to put in the extra work because we have to prove everyone else that we can." - Interviewee #2
<b>Theme #3: Lack of professional development opportunities</b>	
<b>Sub Categories</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotations</b>
Latinas are on their own	<p>"Every opportunity that I found for seminars and all that professional development stuff have been completely on my own." - Interviewee #6</p> <p>"You are a Latina working your butt off and doing everything you are supposed to, but nobody is coaching you. Nobody tells you what to do to move from a manager position into an associate director role or helping you</p>

	create a sort of one-year pathway. This is what you need to do. This is how we are gonna get you there. This is what I am expecting of you." - Interviewee #2
The organization's size and budget impacts the number of professional development opportunities that Latinas receive	"They are small nonprofits. So the opportunity for growth, the opportunity for management-level positions, all those things are less in general. - Interviewee #1  "The lack of resources creates limitations. People are not getting the training. The structures are not there, and they are fewer for Latinas". - Interviewee #2

Table 1. Answers to research question one, collected via semi-structured interviews. Table created by the researcher.

RQ2. What are nonprofit organizations currently doing to advance Latinas in the workplace?	
Theme #1: They have an organizational culture that values professional development	
Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations
Supervisor investment matters	"My supervisor and I had this conversation because she knows that I do not plan to stay on direct services for a long time. She was the one that brought it up and said, well, you know, if it interests you, what I can do for you is to get you connected to the individuals who work in these positions so you can shadow them and see what they do, and ask them questions. And then if you like that position, go for it and apply. I was like, oh, wow. I felt supported, you know? It was not like you cannot do this, which I had in the past." - Interviewee #5
Board members are engaged	"In the beginning, my board provided me with a leadership training course. It was a year-long program for a new Executive Director, and the content was beneficial. We talk about everything, whether it is how to work with the board, managing staff, setting up organizational financial goals, programming, etc." -Interviewee #4  "Not all organizations make an effort to make sure that the program people have a chance to interact with the board.

	<p>In my current organization, the program staff attends all board meetings, and they are expected to give updates about their programs. There is an accountability level that is not only from your direct boss or the Executive Director but also at the board level. It allows you to have that level of interaction with the board, and not all organizations offer that. Often it is only the Executive Director who goes to the board meetings. Some employees never see the board and never get to know them, so I guess it is a bit of a power dynamic. Sometimes, it could be on purpose; maybe the Executive Director wants just to be the face of the board, bring the information, and not want to involve the programming staff. However, I think that is a problem. All staff need to have the opportunity to interact with the board, show their work, and talk about challenges. That is the only way you can grow, you know". - Interviewee #1</p>
<p>Invitation to key meetings and events</p>	<p>"Our Executive Director encourages professional development and brings staff to key meetings or key events to meet other people and interact and talk about the programs. Some Executive Directors just attend all the meetings and all the events, and they kind of protect their staff so that they can do their work. By doing that, they are preventing them from interacting with other constituents and people out there. So that idea of making sure that you include your key staff, or the staff that you are trying to grow into different positions will be good. That applies, of course, to Latinas, but also others". - Interviewee #1</p>
<p>Theme #2: They are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion</p>	
<p>Sub Categories</p>	<p>Exemplar Quotations</p>
<p>Ongoing anti-racism learning</p>	<p>"When I joined this organization, they were definitely in the weeds of taking diversity, equity, and inclusion very intentionally. We read last year a book by the name Whistling Vivaldi by Claude Steele, I believe. And then this year, we read White fragility by Robin DiAngelo." -Interviewee #2</p> <p>"The board gets why we must have conversations about implicit bias and cultural sensitivity, even when they are uncomfortable because we are all focusing on whom we</p>

	are serving. It is not about me. It is not about the board. It is not about the donors. It is about the students." -Interviewee #4
Culturally relevant professional support	"A Spanish speaking psychologist made this group, so every Spanish speaking staff gets together to talk about how to support clients. We also talk about the language itself, because sometimes it is hard to translate mental health words into Spanish. It is super useful because we know that we have that one person that supports us. I also love that the organization even brought that in because it shows that they care about us. They do it for different cultures and ethnicities, not just Latinxs." - Interviewee #5
Theme #3: They have Latina representation on the board and senior management positions	
Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations
Latina representation matters	"I could have never learned to be confident from any other person other than a Latina. I could not learn confidence from watching a white woman navigate the world. When you learn from a Latina who shares your experiences and has been able to get far in her professional career, you start visualizing yourself and your abilities to get there." -Interviewee #2  "The Director of Programs is Latina, and it was just amazing to see. I told her right away that I look up to her so much because she is the director of so many supervisors. That is the importance of having a Latina role model because I feel like if she did it, then I could do it too." -Interviewee #5

Table 2. Answers to research question two, collected via semi-structured interviews. Table created by the researcher.

RQ3. What strategies can be implemented on an organizational level to create a culture that embraces Latina leadership?	
Theme #1: Embrace Latina's Differences	
Sub Categories	Exemplar Quotations

<p>Recruit Latinas as board members</p>	<p>"Make sure that there is Latina representation on the board. If you have a Latina sitting on the board, they will be the first to raise the question of where are our other Latinx leaders at the board and the staff level? I think it is crucial to have diversity and Latina representation on the board level to create organizational change". -Interviewee #1</p> <p>"I think another strategy is to work to diversify boards actively. Humans seem to be more comfortable with people who look like them. By diversifying the board, we would be able to start seeing more POC Executive Directors, but that shift starts when you have a more diverse board. I think there are just so many good things that come out of having boards that reflect the population that the organization is serving. Only good can come of that." - Interviewee #4</p>
<p>Establish employee affinity groups</p>	<p>"And what I keep going back to is having a safe space, whether within your organization or outside of your organization where employees can have conversations with peers." - Interviewee #4</p> <p>"creating affinity groups... space where people who identify as Latinas, bicultural, bilingual, whatever the case might be can feel safe." - Interviewee #6</p> <p>"Bring in some type of cultural support like an affinity group so we could have a safe space to go to." - Interviewee #5</p>
<p>Theme #2: No tolerance for microaggressions and implicit bias</p>	
<p>Sub Categories</p>	<p>Exemplar Quotations</p>
<p>Hold each other accountable</p>	<p>"I have been in spaces where people have made fun of the way I speak and look. When someone is bilingual, and they have an accent, I have seen how they try to correct the way they speak. We need to be better about calling out microaggressions and calling people out for saying racist, sexist or cisgender remarks." -Interviewee #6</p>
<p>Be willing to have uncomfortable conversations</p>	<p>"I think it is important to have staff and board members be open to having tough conversations that will come up inevitably. I feel like I can have very open and frank conversations with my staff. If they hear something</p>

	inappropriate, they can talk to me about it, and then I address it with the board. I think it is important to be open and receptive to having some of the uncomfortable conversations that will come up about race, ethnicity, gender, etc."- Interviewee #4
<b>Theme #3: Create a leadership pipeline for Latinas</b>	
<b>Sub Categories</b>	<b>Exemplar Quotations</b>
Have a holistic approach to hiring and promotions	<p>"... recognize that not everyone has been given the same opportunities along the way. Be open to supporting that leader, whether it is board members directly providing support or providing opportunities for that leader in learning the skills that they have not learned up to that point. People rarely checked off every single skill in the job description. I think it is important to recognize that there is a difference in the trajectory for Latinx leaders and white leaders. The pipeline is very different from non-Latinx leaders. And so understanding that and being open to providing any support needed to have them be successful in their role." - Interviewee #4</p> <p>"Do not take away opportunities to work on a skill or project and then give it to someone else because they have a master's in project management or whatever the case would be like. Let them do the work and then provide them with feedback. Let them do it and let them show you how they can do it and how that is completely different from so and so." - Interviewee #6</p> <p>"It is important to look beyond the resume because they could have come from where I came from and have so much to offer. However, you are not going to get that from just a resume. I was intentional as a recruiter to talk to people, interview over the phone, learn about them, and assess whether they had those skills that could make them very successful. As an HR person, that has given me an edge in finding talent. Believe in people and try to coach them as long as they believe in themselves." - Interviewee #2</p>
Maximize 1:1 weekly	"Supervisors and managers who are trying to cultivate the

check-Ins	next generation of leaders must push their staff to educate themselves and do more professional development opportunities. During one-on-one weekly meetings, the conversation could be all about work, so I think it should be the manager's responsibility to make sure that there is always a piece about professional development in those conversations." - Interviewee #1
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*Table 3. Answers to research question three, collected via semi-structured interviews. Table created by the researcher.*

**Section 5: Recommendations**

Based on the literature review and the data analysis, nonprofit organizations committed to building a more inclusive and equitable workplace for Latinas, and all its employees can start by implementing the recommendations below to address common obstacles in the workplace.

**Obstacle 1:**

Latinas in the US are paid 46% less than white men and 31% less than white women, no matter their education level and professional experiences.

**Recommendation 1:**

First, choose and maintain the right type of job evaluation method to create an internally equitable salary structure. The point-factor job evaluation system is recommended over the slotting system to reduce bias in the process even though it is more complicated than the slotting system. The slotting system is more straightforward but lower in reliability because "when two people independently slot jobs, they are likely to come up with different solutions than in a point-factor system" (Day, 2016, p. 654). No matter which system you decide to implement, it is crucial to maintain it and reevaluate jobs every three years or more frequently if jobs change often. Research has shown that investing in job evaluation systems positively impacts employees' job satisfaction and addresses internal pay inequities.

The next step is to build an externally and internally equitable salary structure. The pay scales and criteria for advancement should be clear to all and shared internally with all staff. After installing this new system, it is crucial to provide reparative pay to those employees that are paid below the market and to those who are paid substantially above their pay should be frozen "until the time that the structure's maximum catches up or exceeds it in the course of normal salary structure adjustment" (Day, 2016, p.

665). Last but not least, continue to monitor compensation data based on gender and race/ethnicity to expose any inequalities.

**Obstacle 2:**

Lack of Latina representation in governing boards in the nonprofit sector due to white supremacy culture and institutionalized racism.

**Recommendation 2:**

The lack of diversity of governing boards in the nonprofit sector is deeply rooted in white supremacy culture and institutionalized racism. Historically, white people have had access to networks and intergenerational wealth that people of color have not because of institutionalized racism. Since nonprofit organizations have assigned board members the role of fundraising and have "give or get" policies, they will seek the most "qualified" candidates to perform this task. Since people of color hold only twenty-eight percent of board positions in California compared to fourteen percent nationwide, we can infer that white people are considered the most "qualified" board members (De Vita & Roeger, 2009, p. 6). This reality is even more problematic when we consider that women and people of color make up the majority of paid workers in California's nonprofit sector (De Vita & Roeger, 2009, p. 11). It perpetuates the belief that white people are superior to those of all other races and should, therefore, dominate society. The board of directors is one of the most evident examples of white supremacy culture in the nonprofit sector.

Humans gravitate to people who look like them or share similar experiences, which creates an additional obstacle for the recruitment of people of color as board members. To dismantle white supremacy culture in the nonprofit sector, we need to start from the top by recruiting more Latinas and people of color as board members. As a solution, Executive Directors and Board Chairs committed to diversifying their board can collaborate with other nonprofit organizations in the sector addressing this inequality. For example, the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley holds a Board Match Night twice per year. The Board Match Night is an opportunity for nonprofit representatives to meet Latino Board Leadership Academy fellows who are eager to serve on a nonprofit board.

**Obstacle 3:**

Latinas are overlooked or passed over for promotions.

**Recommendation 3:**

Internal promotions contribute to the professional development of employees and are an essential part of a successful organization. Recruitment studies "have found that individuals hired through internal sources are as much as 24 percent more likely to stay



on the job for the first year, and tend to be more satisfied than those recruited from the outside" because the applicant has a realistic preview of the job (Watson & Abzug, 2016, p. 622). To ensure that Latinas are not overlooked or passed over for promotions due to implicit bias or discrimination, organizations need to create concrete systems for internal hiring and promotions. The criteria utilized to determine promotions need to be hard data and directly related to job performance. It should not be based on opinions or assumptions.

In addition to a transparent process for promotions, invite staff to key meetings and events to provide them with opportunities to showcase their skills and what they bring to the organization. Board meetings are the perfect opportunity for staff to demonstrate their strengths. This opportunity is particularly crucial for Latinas to create a brand for themselves in the organization and move beyond tokenism.

## **Section 6: Conclusions**

If we do not have policies and systems to address institutionalized racism and white supremacy culture in our organizations, we will never be able to create an inclusive and equitable workplace for Latinas and people of color. In order to engage in this work, organizations must reflect first on their own culture, on what they are censuring, and what they are valuing. When they hire diverse professionals, organizations need to reflect on whether they are expected to keep the status quo or genuinely value diverse leadership styles. When talking about leadership, it is imperative for nonprofit organizations and the social sector to think about intersectionality, and in the case of Latina leaders, we need to think deeper about gender, ethnicity, and race to create a safe space for them to be their authentic selves. Nonprofit organizations need to ensure that managers and staff are aware of the diversity among Latinas, and get to know each employee as an individual and not generalize people as part of a group.

### **Limitations**

- The sample was composed of six individuals.
- All interviewees worked in Northern California.
- Four out of six interviewees already hold senior management positions.
- The study had a limited number of Latinx cultures represented. Five out of six interviewees identified as Mexican, Mexican-American, or Chicana.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

- Conduct research with millennials and Gen Z participants holding entry-level positions in the nonprofit sector.
- Latinas are not a monolithic group, and future research should have a vast range of cultures represented.

- Compare and contrast the experiences of brown and afro-Latinas with light-skinned and white-passing Latinas.
- Future research should also include binary and nonbinary transgender participants.
- Latinas in the United States have different experiences depending on the state or the region, and future research should include geographic diversity.
- Compare and contrast the experiences of Latinas born in the United States with those born in other countries.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

1. Please share a little bit about your educational and professional background.
2. What drew you to the nonprofit sector?
3. What organizational or institutional challenges have you experienced in your leadership path in the nonprofit sector?
4. What training, support, coaching, or development was critical to your success in the nonprofit sector?
5. Being a Latina in leadership means that you face intersectional challenges. Describe how this intersectionality has impacted your leadership (positively or negatively) journey?
6. What are some things that organizations you have worked for or collaborated with have done well to promote Latina leadership?
7. What is something you wish the nonprofit sector would know about Latina leadership?
8. If you could suggest three strategies that nonprofit organizations should implement to create a culture that embraces Latina leadership, what would those be?
9. Could you recommend another colleague that I should interview about this topic who might have insights into organizations that have supported Latina Leaders?

## Appendix B

### Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Keishla Yvette Thompson-Echevarría, a Master's degree student in the Nonprofit Administration Program at the University of San Francisco in California. The purpose of this research is to identify strategies that nonprofit organizations can implement to create a culture that embraces Latina leadership. The study will take place from January 2020 to May 2020.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without a penalty until the completion of the research project.
2. I have the right not to answer questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview and ask that the data collected prior to the withdrawal will be deleted.
3. I understand that my participation involves being interviewed by Keishla Yvette Thompson-Echevarría and that the interview will last approximately one hour in length.
4. I understand that my participation will consist of a recorded interview with the researcher via a Zoom video conference.
5. I understand that notes will be written during the interview. An audiotape/videotape of the interview and subsequent transcripts will be made. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
6. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Only the researcher will have access to all audiotaped/videotaped recordings and transcripts.
7. I understand that the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies and that my identity will in no way be revealed.
8. I have carefully read and fully understood the points and statements of this form. All my questions were answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agreed to participate in this study.
9. In the event I have questions or require additional information, I may contact the researcher, Keishla Yvette Thompson-Echevarría, at \*\*\*\*\*@\*\*\*\*\*.\*\*\* and \*\*\*\_\*\*\*\_\*\*\*\*.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Researcher's Signature

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Date