

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

OpenSIUC

Research Papers

Graduate School

2021

Challenging the dominant representation of immigrant Latinas in the United States: A qualitative analysis of the personal stories of Latina pioneers from the 1950-1970s

Scarlett Rodriguez
scarlett.rodriguez@siu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_rp

Recommended Citation

Rodriguez, Scarlett. "Challenging the dominant representation of immigrant Latinas in the United States: A qualitative analysis of the personal stories of Latina pioneers from the 1950-1970s." (Jan 2021).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at OpenSIUC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Papers by an authorized administrator of OpenSIUC. For more information, please contact opensiuc@lib.siu.edu.

CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT REPRESENTATION OF IMMIGRANT LATINAS IN
THE UNITED STATES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONAL STORIES OF
LATINA PIONEERS FROM THE 1950-1970s

by

Scarlett Rodriguez

B.S., Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra, 2018

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts

Department of Communications Studies
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
August 2021

Copyright by Scarlett Rodriguez, 2021
All Rights Reserved

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT REPRESENTATION OF IMMIGRANT LATINAS IN
THE UNITED STATES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONAL STORIES OF
LATINA PIONEERS FROM THE 1950-1970s

by

Scarlett Rodriguez

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the field of Communication Studies

Approved by:

Nilanjana Bardhan, Chair

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 5th, 2021

AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

SCARLETT RODRIGUEZ, for the Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies, presented on May 5th, 2021, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: CHALLENGING THE DOMINANT REPRESENTATION OF IMMIGRANT LATINAS IN THE UNITED STATES: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERSONAL STORIES OF LATINA PIONEERS FROM THE 1950-1970s

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Nilanjana Bardhan

The dominant representations of Latinx immigrants in the U.S. media do a disservice to the humanity of this group and overwhelmingly depict them in negative ways. This paper is an effort to counter these narratives and humanize the experiences of Latina immigrants.

Specifically, it explores and analyzes four personal narratives from Latina women who migrated to the United States between 1950-1970s. The methodological approach in this report is qualitative and interpretive analysis, using open and axial coding. The author discusses how identities are constructed and shaped by the experiences of immigration, and connects it to extant research on power, coloniality, race, and intercultural communication.

DEDICATION

This research paper is dedicated to my grandmothers Livia Lluberés and Ligia Blandino, for being strong and inspiring women who, from very early in my life, taught me the value of empathy and to see others through the lenses of equality. It is also dedicated to my parents, Amarilis Silvestre and Gamaliel Rodríguez, my sisters Nadine and Mariel, and Luis Miguel, for their love and support. Lastly, this paper is dedicated to Latina women who are seeking their place in the world and creating a new life outside of their home countries while deciphering their identity in today's complex world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>HEADING</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT	i
DEDICATION.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
MAJOR HEADINGS	
HEADING 1 – Introduction.....	1
HEADING 2 – Literature Review	6
HEADING 3 – Method.....	17
HEADING 4 – Results.....	21
HEADING 5 – Discussion.....	31
HEADING 6 – Conclusion	35
REFERENCES	37
VITA	41

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Table 1 - Latina immigrant identities and border-crossing experience.....	19

HEADING 1

INTRODUCTION

Traveling and learning about different cultures has always intrigued me since I was little girl. I am the youngest daughter of three sisters, and I grew up in a small town, La Romana, in the Dominican Republic, a Caribbean country with a population of approximately 10 million inhabitants. As I was growing up, it was common to hear stories about Dominicans venturing to “illegally” travel by “*yola*” (boat) to Puerto Rico or doing everything possible to get to the United States in search of the “American Dream.” The motifs for displacement boiled down to political or economic reasons. What I did not completely understand back then was the meaning behind the hardships of immigration and leaving home, and its impact on cultural identity.

I remember when I was a young girl at school I was assigned to read (in Spanish) the novel *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, by Dominican-American writer Julia Alvarez. This novel narrates the story of four sisters —Carla, Sandra, Yolanda, and Sofia— and their family, who flee their home in the Dominican Republic and begin a new life in New York City in 1960, in order to escape from Rafael Leonidas Trujillo's dictatorship. From the perspective of each daughter and from the Garcia family as a whole, they tell their stories about being at home — and not at home — in the United States, and their struggles with acculturation, assimilation, sense of displacement and confusion of identity.

This story, in addition to serving as part of my inspiration for writing this paper, would resonate with me in different moments throughout my life — especially during the last few years — and possibly with the experiences of many Latina women who have left their homes to live in a foreign country. One of these moments was during my first experience leaving home to live alone abroad in 2016, when I sojourned to Ottawa, Canada, for an exchange semester. As a

young Latina immigrant woman — although under different circumstances — for the first time I was able to relate my experiences to some of the struggles that the Garcia sisters experienced. Being the only Dominican student and the only one coming from the Caribbean on campus, I was able to interact with people from other cultures and add new cultural dimensions to my own identity. However, for the first time, I experienced the struggles of assimilating in a new environment, the sense of belonging and nostalgia. Later, in 2019, I once again decided to leave my home country and embark on a new adventure in the United States to accomplish my graduate studies. Again, I was in an environment where I was the only Dominican on campus. These experiences have influenced how I interpret the world today and have also served as self-reflection on what it means to be an immigrant woman in the United States and how one’s identity is impacted by moving through international borders and making a “new home out of home.”

This report analyzes four personal narratives from Latina women who migrated to the United States between 1950-1970: Josefina Rosario (Dominican), Julieta Marroquin Castellanos (Guatemalan), Tessie Salabert (Cuban), and Olga Escobar (Guatemalan). These stories are part of the *Latina Pioneers*’ section in The Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island’s website *nuestrasraicesri.org* (Martinez, n.d.). This project began in 1991 when Marta V. Martinez, Executive Director of Rhode Island Latino Arts and oral historian, met and recorded the memories of Josefina Rosario, known as “Doña Fefa,” who had been co-owner (with her husband, Tony) of *Fefa’s Market*, the first *bodega* in Rhode Island. This first encounter inspired Martinez to write the stories from the four largest Latinx groups, based on the 1990 Census: Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, and Guatemalans.

According to the website, The Latino Oral History Project communicates and presents

the history and “*raíces*,” which means “roots” in English, of Latinxs through the collection of stories that showcase the successes and the struggles of the Latinx community in Rhode Island. Its final objective is to preserve the stories of those who first made their way to the United States to serve as inspiration for the new generations.

I selected these four stories because the life and experiences of the first group of women to come to the United States is a rich subject to explore and not as widely studied. In similar ways to what happened to the Garcia sisters in Alvarez’ novel, Josefina Rosario, Julieta Marroquin Castellanos, Tessie Salabert, and Olga Escobar narrate their experiences when, in the middle of the 20th century, they left their home for political and economic reasons and started a new life in a “new home” in the United States.

I further chose this project because, although a lot has changed in the last 70 years, I understand that the reality of immigration has not changed so much, and the stories of migrant women continue to be written – and unheard, in most cases. People keep moving around the world and looking for a better life overseas. That will not change given the unequal nature of our colonially shaped world. Therefore, I hope that this project will help young migrant women like me to interpret our globalized world and self-reflect on what it means to be an immigrant woman in the United States, or any part of the world, and how one’s identity is impacted by moving through international borders. Also, this project seeks to shed light on the other side of the coin and challenge the negative representation that has been given to this segment of people in the U.S. media.

While the Dominican Republic lived through one of the longest-lasting dictatorships in Latin America until 1961, the Cuban revolution took place causing the fall of the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship and the coming to power of Fidel Castro. In Guatemala, a civil war occurred

from 1960 to 1996, and from 1970 to 1978 there were a series of military dictators. The tension, fear, and political and economic instability in these countries motivated the first large waves of immigrants to the United States, among them Rosario, Castellanos, Salabert, and Escobar.

Analyzing these personal narratives would contribute to the larger conversation and knowledge on the construction of personal identities in the context of migration and issues of history, coloniality, and culture. In order to understand the intercultural dynamics of our world today, it is relevant to study the stories of these first women who migrated from their home countries to the United States between 1950-1970 and how their experiences have impacted them and others around them.

Personally, as a Dominican woman, I believe that it is of great value to know and understand the history and origins of the Latinx communities in the United States and specifically the implications of being a Latina pioneer such as Josefina Rosario, who has been credited with launching the first wave of immigration from the Dominican Republic. Rosario is remembered as the “mother” of Rhode Island’s Latinx communities and founder of the first Latinx store in the state. Similarly, the stories of Castellanos, Salabert, and Escobar shed light on how it was for these pioneer women to experience for the first time the phenomenon of migration and making a “home away from home” — something that is very common and present in today’s globalized world, but which continues to be studied over time. Such analyses are especially needed to counter the negative representations of immigrant women and men in U.S. media. This research report project aims to highlight their voices and share their stories in order to provide a better understanding of who they are and how their experiences have shaped their identities.

The methodological approach I use in this report is qualitative and interpretive analysis. I conducted open and axial coding to analyze and develop themes from the selected narratives in

order to respond broadly to the following research questions:

- How are the personal experiences and identities of Latina immigrant women in the United States shaped by their experience of crossing international borders?
- What did it mean to be a Latina immigrant woman in the U.S. in the 1950-1970s?
- What are the struggles faced by Latina migrant women in the U.S.?
- How do Latina immigrant women perceive and reconstruct a new sense of self after leaving their home countries?

In this report, I draw from extant literature that is relevant to the construction of cultural identities and the experience of migration, power, culture, and communication. Second, I conduct a qualitative analysis of the four personal stories I have selected and conduct open and axial coding to draw out themes and shed light on the stories of these women. Finally, I outline the findings and conclusions.

HEADING 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of migration is a popular topic in the media around the world, and it has been an important part of the agenda for international discussion and debate throughout history. After all, being on the move is natural in humanity and it has occurred since the earliest times. It is the interpretations and politics related to migration that keep changing with the times. The International Organization for Migration (2019) defines the term migrant as:

An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students. (p. 132)

This movement can be motivated by many reasons. Usually, people move in search of better living conditions or better opportunities. I and many of the people I have met while studying abroad have left their homes to grow in their professional area and to access a quality education that they may not be able to obtain in their home countries. Many people move from one country to another in search of job opportunities. Other people, however, rather than leaving voluntarily have escaped from their countries in order to live, and survive, extreme situations such as war or persecution. Today, more people than ever live in a country other than the one in which they were born. According to the *International Migration 2020 Report*, “It is estimated that the

number of persons living outside of their country of origin reached 281 million in 2020” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2020, p. 1).

It is common today to know someone first-hand who is a migrant or who has emigrated from their country of origin to another. We might know the stories of friends or family members who have experienced moving through international borders for any given reason. Another primary medium where immigrant stories are disseminated is through the media.

Much has been researched and written about how the media have the power to persuade audiences and influence their thoughts on any topic. When it comes to immigrants, the media have tremendous power to represent them in ways that do not match the immigrants’ own experiences. That is why this paper centers the stories told by four women who migrated from different countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States. Studying these stories from Latina pioneers who migrated to the United States could potentially lead to a greater understanding of how immigrants shape their identities, how we all make sense of our experiences while crossing international borders and adapting to new realities, and how society and the media depict this social group. In the following section of this paper, I seek to respond to unknowns with extant research regarding representation, identity in terms of the process of immigration, and the intersection between media, power, and identity. Lastly, I provide a brief overview of qualitative and interpretive analysis, my chosen method for this research report.

Representation as a form of communication and power

The issue of the depiction of immigrants in the media has been studied from different perspectives in order to question the ways in which the media create and disseminate news stories about different types of immigrants. This paper intends to contribute to the larger conversation and knowledge on the depiction of minority groups, specifically female immigrants

in the media in the United States by looking into issues of power, globalization, coloniality, culture, and race, and connecting them to how immigrants are represented. The implications for intercultural relations and intercultural communication are also discussed.

According to Halualani (2019), cultures are impacted by how they are represented, and such representation produces meaning through language, words, and images. This occurs within already existing discourse. It is important to study the dominant discourses regarding immigrants in the United States, since they shape how people see and understand this cultural group and influence policies and laws that impact immigrants.

There are various contexts of power present in the migration issue that impact intercultural communication mainly in terms of economy, government, and media. The dominant and subordinate groups are clearly identified, where dominant parties are privileged and have the power to define the reality of immigrants. “The issue of migrants as disruptive and problematic to the nation is primarily an affective construction, deployed powerfully through the political class, where certain migrants...are cast as disruptive, dangerous, different” (Tazreiter, 2019, p. 626). The rejection of immigrants, especially Arabs and Latinxs, has spiked in the U.S. media specially after historical events such as the September 11 attacks. The dominant group, which has ideological power over institutions including schools, influences how citizens of this country learn about immigrants since their younger days. The history and the books are written mostly by members of dominant groups; therefore, the version and voices of minority groups are excluded and muted, thus creating room for misinformation and the prejudice of the “Other” – immigrants. Then media industries, news, and advertising – often produced by non-immigrants – continue to reinforce perceptions that may be far from reality of the immigrants themselves, and contribute to the building of barriers to the understanding between cultures (Halualani, 2019).

On many occasions, the media have focused their agenda on immigrants as a primary problem, as an identity group, that attacks the United States, and refer to them as provoking a “crisis.” Culture and visual communication contribute to generating crisis feelings and crisis talk on the issue of migration. Tazreiter (2019) explains that the concept of “migration crisis” has been used by dominant groups in societies as a way to divert public attention from social and political problems unrelated to immigrants, which consciously or unconsciously impact the crisis narratives of migration.

In her study, Tazreiter (2019) draws attention to the importance and power of visual communication (photographs, video, film, artistic manifestations, etc.) to portray refugees and immigrants, and to serve as an instrument in shedding light on the hardships and abuses that asylum-seekers have faced in detention. She criticizes the labeling of this issue as “crisis migration,” which she explains is used to divert public attention from issues that sovereign states, political leaders, and political parties loathe to deal with.

Tazreiter (2019) specifically refers to the case of Australia, a country that reflects crisis narratives in relation to all types of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, but also mentions examples of similar narratives from other countries like the United States and Turkey. The language of former U.S. President Donald Trump regarding the construction of a great wall between the U.S. and Mexico refers to a crisis narrative, and positions migration a “problem” his government would solve.

The dominant discourse around immigrants often emphasizes the cost that it represents for a country to receive them, the lack of sufficient jobs for all, and access to health, among others. However, what does not get emphasized is the great positive impact that immigrants have demonstrated they have on receiving societies. Pieterse (2020) argues the existence of an uneven

globalization and insists that national economic achievements cannot deny giving credit to the roles of diasporas, minorities, and ethnic groups. It is precisely because of this group of people who left their home countries to seek better opportunities abroad that today we live in a global world, where languages are no longer a barrier to understanding each other, products from all around the world are within our reach, and borders are getting more porous. Globalization, in terms of the people that flow across national boundaries, is a productive framework for understanding the shifting social landscapes in which contemporary people are often embedded in their daily lives. Arjun Appadurai (1990) defined “ethnoscape” as:

The landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. (p. 95).

However, despite today’s globalized world, the challenges of discrimination and inequity towards minorities and immigrants remain. This is because despite the opening up of borders and escalation in social justice discourse in our world, many continue to remain ethnocentric, see immigrants and minorities as a threat to the economy and to their cultural and national identities, and desire closed borders. Spivak (1988) would define these minorities as “subalterns.” In postcolonial studies and in critical theory, the term subaltern describes the less privileged social classes and the Other social groups displaced to the margins of a society, those whose voices are hardly ever heard and understood directly. Hence, Spivak’s question – Can the subaltern speak?

A key element in any process of domination is “epistemic violence,” a term coined by Spivak (1988), where a given group’s ability to speak and be heard is damaged and instead, they become “known” mainly through harmful and negative representations. Because of Spivak’s

work and the work of other philosophers and scholars, the reality that members of oppressed groups can be silenced by virtue of group membership is widely recognized. This paper intends to contribute to the better understanding of immigrants' subaltern reality by sharing their stories in their own voices. Moreover, this research report discusses the earlier times of migration and its implication in postcolonial studies.

In postcolonial studies, Homi J. Bhabha's (1994) writing refers to issues of the migrant and those individuals and family groups moving from postcolonial countries to the West. Bhabha agrees with Edward Said (1978) and his notion of "Orientalism" and poses questions about how individuals from a minority group might survive within a (implicitly or explicitly) violent and oppressive majority culture: How are migrants from postcolonial countries supposed to live when they migrate to countries that oppress them – do they assimilate, or should they strive to retain their heritage somehow? Even though the process of migrating (whether voluntarily or involuntarily) and moving to a new country is very painful for many, more and more people are moving across international borders. This reality is not going to change. What is possible to change is how the Other is represented and understood.

In her work, Shehla Burney (2012) interprets Said's notion of the Other and gets inspired by his work to propose the pedagogy of the Other. For Burney (2012), the Other is understood by Said under the social construction of power and knowledge and represented over centuries of history and colonization. The Other is marginalized, objectified, and often made exotic. One of the main arguments is that Said's pedagogy is a counter-discourse that deconstructs the marginalization of the Other, unfolds the means of oppression and the representation of the Other that socially constructs the Other as the subaltern. In this paper, the mainstream construction of female immigrants in the U.S. as the marginalized "Other" will be challenged, and their voices

will be the voices of protagonists.

In their study, Chuang & Roemer (2015) refer to Latinx stereotypes as part of a larger discourse on Otherness in the United States. They assert that news-media representation plays a critical role in constructing Americanness and the identity of the Other (p. 1047). Chuang & Roemer argue that ‘American’ culture codes “construct the exemplars as a dependent target population that must assimilate American values in order to overcome the ‘deficits’ of being Latinx and/or undocumented” (p. 1045).

Representation of immigrants and the media

As mentioned earlier, research examining the portrayal of immigrants shows that the media generally tend to portray these groups negatively. Results of various studies showcase the tendency of the media to create a crisis mentality and promote negative representations of immigrants to the point of dehumanization. “Such dehumanization can serve to reduce uncertainty, providing definitive answers as to how immigrants and refugees should be viewed and how they should be treated” (Esses, Mediany, & Lawson, 2013, p. 522).

La Rocca (2017) asserts that the media have an indisputable power to change the cognitive structures, and, therefore, the perception that individuals have about what is happening around them, such as the so-called “humanitarian crisis.” La Rocca reinforces this claim by describing the two main actors that narrate this phenomenon: media networks and State/non-State actors. “It is evident that means of communication produce effects because they are not just technologies; they are also relation and mediation” (La Rocca, 2017, p. 225). The narratives generated by the media have an undeniable power and impact individuals’ thinking and sensibilities in ways that they promote ideals and opinions for or against topics of discussion. This even affects interpersonal relationships.

Quinsaas (2014) argues that through framing, the media create diametrically opposed representations of immigration and contemporary immigrants but at the same time normalize dominant ways of thinking and talking about immigration that sustain and consolidate power relationships. Quinsaas supports this argument with two aims: 1) she compares the construction of immigration as a social problem and the immigrant as a subject in the various news frames, and 2) examines the preexisting discourses in which the news frames are embedded as conveyed by the narrative on the immigrant's relationship to the U.S. American nation. From two policy debates it is possible to study the framing of immigration and how this has impacted the discourses on immigration in mainstream mass media and, generally, in the United States population. The results show differences in the representation of immigrants and contemporary immigrants, and the presence of power relationships.

According to Mercado-Thornton (2013), exclusionary discursive practices need to be reworked since this type of discourse generally promotes an antiimmigration rhetoric and a derogatory association towards immigrants. As part of dehumanization, this rhetoric subtracts the value of these groups as people and places them in different nonhuman categories. "We must dispel commonplace language such as, 'illegal aliens,' 'foreigners,' and 'invaders.' This antiimmigration rhetoric is used too casually and too naturally. By appropriating this language, we are dehumanizing immigrants and it must stop" (Mercado-Thornton, 2013, p. 10). Therefore, as this paper proposes and demonstrates, the most effective way to understand the experiences of a person who leaves their country to seek a better life elsewhere, such as the case of Latina immigrants to the United States, is to listen to their stories told in their own voices.

From another perspective, some scholars argue for immigration as a means to increase cultural diversity and to promote positive aspects of the integration of this group in the United

States. Zayani (2011) argues that fostering cultural diversity in and through the media can go a long way toward bringing a civic discourse which favors tolerance and facilitates co-existence. Zayani reinforces this claim highlighting several interconnected leverage points: media content, practices, processes, ownership, education, structures, and policies. Zayani's purpose is to explore the role of media regarding cultural diversity, the promotion of cultural dialogue, cultural rights, and intercultural citizenship in the era of heightened globalization in order to celebrate cultural diversity. According to Esses et al. (2013), "In order to promote the benefits of immigration and support harmonious relations between immigrants and members of host societies, it is essential that media portrayals of immigrants and refugees not serve the function of transforming uncertainty into crisis" (p. 532).

The change in the construction of messages about immigrants in the media requires a collective effort. According to Zayani (2011), "Warding against the effects of unfair and insensitive media representation requires developing and promoting *media education* and media literacy" (p. 51). A great weight falls on the role of communication professionals; however, the involvement of the government, educators, public policies creators, and the general population is paramount.

One particular concept central to the studies of depiction of Latinx immigrants in the media in the United States is the concept of racialization. According to Halualani (2019), racialization is "the deployment and assignment of race by various structures and interests of power as a construct or marker to differentiate groups and place them in a hierarchy of value... Through racialization, race places groups in unequal relation to one another" (p. 165). This leads to prejudice and discriminations which get historically sedimented along with the meanings of race. Steinberg (2004) focuses part of her research about the negative and

stereotypical images of Latinx immigrants in the media and refers to Omi and Winant (1986) to explain the issue of racial formation and the historical development of race in the United States:

They [Omi and Winant (1986)] propose that there is a constant dialectical relationship that occurs between the micro and macro levels of social relations in society. For instance, an individual could be very proud of their individual racial identity but experience institutionalized racism at the macro level of social relationships. The theory of racial formation examines how these two levels of social relationships are connected and how race is part of the establishment of hierarchical social relations. (Steinberg, 2004, p. 127)

One aspect of racialization in the United States discussed by Steinberg is the unrecognition of different groups of Latinxs who come from different countries, and who are negatively stereotyped as a homogenous group of “illegal aliens.” It is because of these types of labels used by the media that many times people associate the word “Latinx” with “illegal,” even though many are not undocumented. And even if they are, no human being is ever “illegal.” To refer to them as such is a form of dehumanization and epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988).

Steinberg (2004) also argues that negative and stereotypical images of Latinx immigrants are portrayed in the media, after researching Southwestern newspaper articles referring to immigrants, and highlighting the historical background of the illegal immigration issue and the role of the media. Steinberg claims that “the overall media portrayal of immigrants has been negative. As a result, portions of the American public have become fearful of immigrants: people who may have brown skin and look different from the stereotypical white American” (p. 111). Cervantes, Alvord, and Menjivar (2018) agree that these narratives that are constructed and disseminated by the media result in negative effects on the immigrant community and hosting

societies. Anxieties, fears related to crime, terror, and threats to the nation are some of the outcomes and consequences that emerge from the long trend of the criminalization of immigration law through law and media. In their study, Cervantes et al. (2018) conducted research using an ethnographic approach to study the experiences of Guatemalan migrants and U.S. citizens living in a town in Kansas. These scholars assert that these criminalizing practices have been accompanied and reinforced by a growing rhetoric that justifies and legitimizes the association between Latinxs and criminality. Media depiction is crucial in this respect:

Narratives that classify immigrants into “deserving” or “undeserving,” “worthy” or “unworthy,” transmitted through the media and cemented in laws, affect public views and politicians’ actions towards particular immigrant groups. At this historical junction, Latinxs/as bear the brunt of criminalization and exclusion, with short- and long-term consequences for their families and entire communities. (Cervantes et al., 2018, p. 194)

This literature, relevant to the construction of cultural identities and the experience of migration, power, culture and communication, sheds light on the depiction of Latinx immigrants and serves as a bridge to connect to the following sections of this paper where I conduct a qualitative analysis of the four personal stories I have selected and provide conclusion remarks.

HEADING 3

METHOD

Qualitative interpretative analysis was selected as the method for this study because this method is well suited for examining and analyzing themes of stories and expressions — narratives. Through qualitative coding, I developed themes from across the four narratives selected in order to answer the research questions posed. The goal of this type of qualitative analysis is to focus on the potential meanings of data, using a two-stage process of coding: open coding and axial coding (Esterberg, 2002, p. 158). Open coding is:

An interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically. In open coding, event/action/interaction, and so forth, are compared against others for similarities and differences; they are also conceptually labelled. In this way, conceptually similar ones are grouped together to form categories and their subcategories. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 432)

The second stage of the coding process is axial coding, which identifies the relationships between the open coding categories and subcategories to develop themes that describe and explain the phenomenon/condition under investigation. Once the coding process was completed, I applied the themes to the research questions to address them.

The data for this study consisted of the combined texts of four stories from Latina immigrants, collected and shared by The Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island on the website Nuestrasraicesri.org. As described in the introduction, the Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island began in 1991 when Marta Martinez, its founder, met and recorded the memories of Josefina Rosario, who migrated from the Dominican Republic to the United States, and who had been co-owner (with her husband) of the first *bodega* in Rhode Island. This story inspired

Martinez to record the voices of many other Latinx pioneers, focusing on the four largest Latinx groups on the 1990 Census: Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians and Guatemalans. As Martinez (n.d.) shares on the website:

The Latino Oral History Project communicates and presents the history of Latinos. But most importantly, will guide the future of Latinos. The stories I've collected showcase the successes and the struggles of the Latino community. I would like to see young people read and remember these stories and have role models they can look up to. (para. 7)

The website contains a wide-range collection of personal stories, photos, documents, and pieces of paper documenting the history of Rhode Island's Spanish-speaking community. The project also offers workshops and presentations to youth groups, community groups, and schools about the history of Latinxs in Rhode Island.

Although the four Latina immigrants left their home countries in similar conditions, each experience was different, and their identities have been shaped in different ways. Table 1 displays identity statements extracted from their stories and their experiences leaving their home countries and crossing national borders. Since this data was taken from prewritten articles and I was not engaged in the interview process, I chose these "identity statements" based on the information that the interviews provided and narrated regarding who they were before and during their border-crossing experience. These portions of the stories add to my research questions and offer an insight in their own words of where these women were born, their age, who their family was and their feelings and thoughts right before departing from their home countries. These statements provide a context for the qualitative analysis that follows.

Table 1*Latina immigrant identities and border-crossing experience*

Latina immigrant	Identity statement / leaving home
Josefina Rosario	<p>I was twenty-one years old when I came to the United States.</p> <p>After I left, I remember I missed my mother, I did not want to leave her. I cried, you know. I was happy, yet sad. I cried because I was leaving my mother and my sisters and my brothers, but then I was happy because I wanted to come to the United States to be with my sister.</p> <p>On the plane, I only carried a small suitcase, like a tote bag. I think it was full of candies, but I don't remember exactly. I do remember it was cold when I arrived. It was <i>not</i> like Santo Domingo. It was September... September 8, 1949.</p> <p>It was hard for me to leave my family behind, especially my mother, who had been paralyzed at the age of 35 when she suffered a stroke. But, my mother knew I would be in good hands with my sister in New York. <i>Ella sabía que ya estaba bien cuidada yo, estaré cuidada con mi otra hermana. Y yo sabía que ella estaría en buenas manos con mis hermanos y hermanas allá.</i> And I did not worry because I knew my brothers and sisters would take good care of my mother, as well.</p>
Julieta Marroquin Castellanos	<p>I trained as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) at Roosevelt Hospital, Guatemala City in 1963, and was working there for about five months when I learned about an agency that was hiring CNAs to work in the United States. So, I went to that agency and after three months, I was ready to take the trip. I was hired to work as a CNA in a nursing home in Norton, Massachusetts, and that is when my life changed. I was 19 years old.</p>
Olga Escobar	<p>I was born in Guatemala, in Puerto Barrios. It is located at the mouth of Lake Isabal and the state by the same name. After a year I moved to a place called Zacápa, where my grandparents come from, and that's the place where I grew up. I had two children when I lived [in Guatemala].</p> <p>And I do not think that I am a specific case, I think that we are thousands and thousands of immigrants who do that, who leave the children behind. Particularly the people who have to save lives, they will leave the children behind, they will not expose the children to the frontiers or whatever. That is the reason why I came because I had the support of my family. I had someone to take care of my kids.</p>
Tessie Salabert	<p>I was born in the city of Havana, Cuba and I came to the U.S. when I was 11 years old. <i>Up to that point, I had a very nice childhood, actually.</i></p>

We had a very nice life socially in terms of schooling. I was a swimmer, a competitive swimmer. [My family and I] weren't considered the rich, but we weren't considered the poor either. We were, more or less, the middle class, and [I thought] we had a nice life.

We left on April 10, 1961. I remember going to the airport that day and they took us into what was referred to as "the fishbowl," because it was a building made of glass. Our parents couldn't come, nobody's parents were allowed. It was all just children, all waiting for the plane to leave. When we boarded the plane, there were lots of kids already there, inside the plane.

The story of Josefina Rosario (Martinez, Sanchez, & Ziner, 1991), along with the stories of Julieta Marroquin Castellanos (Martinez, 2019), Tessie Salabert (Quintas & Martinez, 2013) and Olga Escobar (Lucero, 2000), were analyzed using open and axial coding. I now discuss the themes that I developed through this process and apply them to address the research questions posed in the introduction.

HEADING 4

RESULTS

In this section, I describe the results that emerged through open and axial coding and analysis of the four stories from Latina pioneers who migrated to the United States. Three overall themes emerged: 1) Meaning(s) of being a Latina immigrant in the United States, 2) Struggles faced by Latina immigrants in the United States, and 3) Constructing a new sense of self after leaving home countries.

Meaning(s) of being a Latina immigrant in the United States

Three sub-themes emerged within this overall theme: (1) entrepreneurship and hard work, (2) leadership and activism symbol, and (3) community pioneers.

Entrepreneurship and hard work

Most of the women narrated in their stories that they came from hard working families, and that even before coming to the United States, their parents and close relatives were striving to have a better quality of life. In her story, Tessie Salabert recalled how devoted her father was to her job: “My father was a medical doctor and as such, he had to work very hard. What I mainly remember [about] him then is that he was always working.”

Josefina Rosario, after being established in the United States, indicated that she and her husband had a great interest in having their own business. Rosario explained that “We all worked hard to save our money so we could open our own business.” Rosario and her husband opened the first Latin *bodega* (market) in Providence, and as a result of their good treatment of others, their service, and the demand for products, they saw the need to innovate in their business and at the same time served as a bridge to attract more Latinxs to their community: “We continued to drive to New Haven or New York 2-3 times each month, and we brought more and more

Hispanics to Providence. Soon, the demand for Latin products went up, so then we began to bring back food and began to deliver it door-to-door, *como de domicilio*.”

Julieta Marroquin also saw the potential to open a *bodega*, after starting to sell Guatemalan products, especially food. She said: “To earn extra money, I would make traditional Guatemalan food: I made *tamales* — up to 150 or 200 *tamales* — and would sell them at soccer games, to other Guatemalan families.” Julieta Marroquin explains that her convenience store, *Julie’s Market*, might have been the first Guatemalan market in that area.

Leadership and activism symbol

When reflecting on their legacy, the influence of their lives in the community, and how others in the community perceived them, the women shared anecdotes and explained how they were respected by the community and were seen as leaders. Josefina Rosario reflected: “Today, I feel like many Hispanic people treat me like I am somebody special. I guess I brought an awful lot of people together. See, we were such a small community here back then, and we took care of each other.” Rosario explained that she often was referred to as “The mother of the Hispanic community” and that people would often show gratitude to her and her husband, especially for supporting Latinx families when they first arrived in Providence.

Olga Escobar, when working for a health services center in Rhode Island, noticed that there were not many Latinxs coming to the center, even though there were many of them in the community. She decided to change that and started working with *Acción Hispana* (which later became *Progreso Latino*):

I called [Colombian] people that I knew didn’t have insurance, and I would say ‘You know they have special services that will check your blood pressure and sugar level, you should check it out.’ People soon began to use the center. I think I was the first Hispanic

to work there.

That is when Olga started to relate what she was doing with “leadership” and “activism.” She explained that she started her activism in Rhode Island in 1978-79 after receiving her Associates Degree in education and social services and becoming active in the Colombian community through her work with *Acción Hispana*. Not only did Olga motivate the Latinx community to benefit from health services, but she also began to motivate companies to hire immigrants and recognize the importance of attracting culturally diverse audiences.

Tessie Salabert also started working with *Progreso Latino* in 1981 and joined the board of directors. She said, “I also remember working with *SER Jobs for Progress* and *Proyecto Esperanza (Project Hope)*, just two of the many social service organizations that worked to help Latinos and all immigrants in Rhode Island.” Tessie, from an early age, witnessed how the Latino community in Rhode Island was growing and, motivated by her father who was selected president of the Cuban Club of Rhode Island when they first arrived, became involved in efforts to help other immigrants and refugees.

Community pioneers

When referring to their arrival in the United States and the existing community of Latinxs, the women explained that they were the first or among the first to arrive and how they witnessed the growth of the Latinx community. Josefina Rosario said, “I strongly believe that my family and I were the first Dominican family to live in Providence, and maybe Rhode Island.” In addition, they reflected on how the growth of their communities had a positive impact on the hosting society. Julieta explained how being the first Guatemalan and the Latina with a degree in Psychology and Sociology in Rhode Island opened doors for her in a fast-growing Latinx community. Julieta also explained how important it was for her to share her culture with others:

During those early days, in the mid-1980s as the Guatemalan community was growing, two guys and myself, we decided we were going to form a cultural committee... We called it *Comité Guatemalteco*. Today it is known as the *Guatemalan American Association of Rhode Island*, or GAARI... And among other things, we did folklore dance and introduced Marimba music; we mainly just wanted to share the Guatemalan culture with others.

Tessie Salabert explained that when she and her family moved to Rhode Island in the mid-1960s they found only a few Cubans. She was a young girl, and her father became president of the *Cuban Club of Rhode Island*, which according to Salabert was associated with the *International Institute of Rhode Island (IIRI)* and aimed to help incoming immigrants and refugees. In her words, "... it made sense that the Cubans were involved with the IIRI because really, we were the refugees coming to Rhode Island in those days." Salabert also pointed out that it was important for immigrants to get on with their lives as soon as they arrived in this new country. The community in place would therefore help them resettle because they themselves had experienced being in the shoes of the newer immigrants.

Struggles faced by Latina immigrants in the United States

Three sub-themes emerged under this theme: (1) Struggles with new language, (2) living and fighting with inequity and discrimination, and (3) cultural shock and assimilation.

Struggles with new language

Most of the Latina women in this study indicated in their stories that they and people in the community had trouble adapting to the language of the new country. Their native language was Spanish, and for most of these women this was the first time they were forced to learn English in order to communicate. Josefina Rosario said that "...it was a struggle for us and many

other Hispanics, as well. Many people had to rely on one another for help. Many of the Dominicans and other Hispanics who had kids that spoke English, had to ask them to interpret when they went out.”

Julieta Marroquin shared the story of when, for the first time, she ordered “American food” at a restaurant and was proud because she was able to do that by herself: “I’ll never forget that, because I was able to order a hamburger; I taught myself how to because I wanted to speak English. I became so proud that I could order a hamburger and an ice cream because that was, you know, the basic American food, and I could buy it with no help!” According to Julieta Marroquin, at first, she did not need to know the language to do her job, but then she elaborated that there were inequities in payment for Guatemalan workers in comparison to English-speaking employees. Julieta referred to an encounter she had with her supervisor after deciding she was going to quit her job: “By then, I spoke a little bit of English, and I said, *I’m leaving anyway. You’re not going to hold me here!*” And then he mocked me: he told me I was going to starve because I couldn’t speak English and wouldn’t be able to find a job.” After sharing that story, Julieta expressed how important it was for her to learn English.

Olga Escobar explained that to get the job that led her to move to live in the United States, she required the help of a friend to translate for her and write letters to the family that offered her a job. She said, “And it’s funny when you are not familiar with English names because I didn’t translate the names... and I didn’t know which one was Lawrence and which one was Catherine – if Catherine was a female or male and if Lawrence was a female or male.”

According to Tessie Salabert, her experience was positive since she spoke English. She said, “We were taught English since early on in Cuba, so we could understand everything.” However, her brother didn’t speak English at all, and it wasn’t until they arrived in Miami that he

started learning. Over time, Tessie and her siblings adapted, started school and learned the language and culture of the new country.

Living and fighting with inequity and discrimination

Two of the women in the stories analyzed expressed experiencing inequity and discrimination as Latina immigrants in the United States. According to Julieta Marroquin, she wasn't happy in her job because she lost her freedom and she found discrepancies in how Guatemalan workers were being paid and treated. She said, "I discovered that we were doing more work and working up to eleven hours, but getting paid for nine, and also getting paid less than the others." Julieta encountered a power dynamic when she approached her supervisor to quit her job, and according to Julieta he said: "*You cannot leave because you haven't paid me. I paid for your flight here, and you still owe me!*"

Similarly, Olga Escobar described that she became an activist in her community because of the treatment that she and other women would receive for being a single mother or for living alone or on public assistance. She emphasized:

There is still a lot of work to do because of discriminations and racism, but I think that we made a lot of strides and I think that we need to encourage young persons to participate in the Hispanic community, and I think that we have a large segment of the population that are young, that are very, very much interested in improving this situation in Rhode Island.

Olga represents the vulnerability of being a Latina immigrant and single mother. Precisely because of her experiences being discriminated and judged, she became involved in the community to support other women and seek to improve the situation of Latinx immigrants in Rhode Island.

Cultural shock and assimilation

The Latina women in this study expressed their experiences when they encountered a new culture in the country that would be their new home. They described what their thoughts were and how they felt, which was mainly a mixture of feelings. Josefina Rosario said, “I was very happy my first week here, but after that I wanted to go back home. The shock set in. I asked myself: *¿Que hice?* What did I do? Oh, where am I?” When she arrived in the United States, Josefina said that she started working from the very first day and had to clean the house and take care of other household chores.

Olga Escobar described how little she knew about the place she had just arrived in the United States back in 1976. In addition to the language, the food and the change in time zone, many immigrants usually find themselves experiencing a weather very different from that of their place of origin and which is often difficult to adapt to. According to Olga:

When at Logan Airport you had to walk to the plane, and it was so hot in the middle of August and I had a coat on. I didn't know English, but I remember that Mrs. Sherman asked me ‘Oh! Is it cold in Guatemala?’ and I said ‘Yes, it is cold in Guatemala.’

Because my friend told me that it was [usually] very cold in Boston! And so that is how much I knew about Boston!

Tessie Salabert emphasized how she was amazed when she arrived in Miami in 1961 as a “refugee” when she was 11-years-old, after running away from Cuba and being separated from her parents. She said, “In Miami, I was still in awe, looking at everything, and everything was different, and everybody was speaking English... It was then that maybe I realized we weren't going back to Havana as quickly as we were told, but I don't remember ever feeling that we weren't going to get together with my parents again.”

Unlike the other Latina women in this study, Tessie was the youngest when she arrived in the United States and entered the country as a refugee and went on to live in foster homes until she reunited with her family. She remembered:

When I think of all those things today, I don't know how my parents did that. How could they and other parents have sent their children away like that? But I know they did what they had to do, under the circumstances.

Tessie represents the challenges and potential traumas of being a child whose parents' resort to extreme decisions in order to preserve their lives and dignity by sending them to the United States. In many cases, like Tessie's, people have no choice but to leave the country they love, where unfortunately their lives are in great danger.

Constructing a new sense of self after leaving home countries

Two sub-themes emerged under this overall theme: (1) family and unity as core values, and (2) resettlement and new life.

Family and unity as core values

All immigrant women in this study expressed the importance of their families in their lives, and how they were an important piece of their personal stories. These women left their home countries for the United States at different stages of their lives, and their families played an important role before, during, and after in the process of rebuilding a new sense of self and starting a "new life" in a "new home." Additionally, these women talk about their new families in the United States, those they built despite not being consanguineous. In her own words, Josefina explains what *familia* means to her:

There are many people who I know who are like family. I don't only think of them as friends, I see them as *familia*, you know. Because they've always been there. We are still

there for one another. And we will always be there, to the end.

Josefina also expressed the importance for her that her daughters follow her legacy and that they do not forget their roots and continue to contribute to the community: “I am very proud of my daughters, Cecilia, Madeline and Miriam. They worked as hard as me and Tony to help many of the Hispanics who came to Providence. I know it was not easy.”

In her story, Tessie Salabert said that family has always been a “big thing” for Cubans and that they would always celebrate events together. She said: “I felt that the Cuban Club was a place for people to join and just spend time together, as one big family, because we felt we didn’t all have our families here, so we became each other’s family.” For Tessie, and many Cuban immigrants, the club was a space where no one felt alone. Their community welcomed Cubans with open arms so that they felt part of a family despite being far from home and their loved ones.

Resettlement and new life

The stories analyzed in this research report showed how a group of Latina immigrants came to the United States and have remained there, making it their new home and their new life. None of them mentioned in their stories that they have returned to their countries of origin or that they regret making the decision to migrate to the United States. For many of them, it was important to get an education and find a job that satisfied them. Some mentioned that they achieved their goals of buying their own cars and houses, and that they have been publicly recognized for their contributions to the Latinx immigrant community.

Julieta Marroquin said that she was very proud when she bought herself a brand-new Volkswagen and a house in Providence, where she raised her daughter. When referring to her career in the United States, she said:

I was very happy to be back as a health care worker, which was my career and what brought me to the U.S. My life circled back to being a health care provider, and I once again felt satisfied and proud of my work. I stayed in the health centers for a few years, and then in 1988, I got a job at Women & Infants and I stayed there until I retired, in 2003.

According to Tessie Salabert, her new life was in Rhode Island, and soon after she arrived, she met new people and lost track of old friends. Salabert worked as a teacher and then as interpreter: “I applied and got the job. I started working there October 4th, 1971. And I left the department in December of 2006.” Tessie prospered in a stable job, where she felt comfortable and happy, until the moment she retired after working there for more than 30 years. Overall, Tessie and the other Latina women achieved their goal of finding better opportunities abroad, providing for their families, and living in dignity. In addition, they contributed to their communities and offered benefits to their host societies.

HEADING 5

DISCUSSION

I now return to the research questions posed earlier. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also briefly discussed.

What did it mean to be a Latina immigrant woman in the U.S. in the 1950-1970s?

The themes that emerged from the data indicate that the experiences told by the Latina women who migrated to the United States in the 1950-1970s, although different, are related to each other in some respects. They all said that they came from hard working families and that when they arrived in the new country, they had to find ways to generate an income and provide for their families. They pointed out how important it was for them to be independent and to thrive by their own means. Both Josefina Rosario and Julieta Marroquin saw the demand for a *bodega* to provide products to the Latinx community and innovated by opening the first-ever markets providing Dominican and Guatemalan products in Rhode Island.

Josefina expressed that her family was the first Dominican family in Providence, and perhaps in Rhode Island. At the time of Tessie's arrival, still a child, there were few Cubans, and her father was one of the first to represent the *Cuban Club of Rhode Island*. Julieta and Olga were among the first Guatemalans.

Additionally, in their stories, the four women expressed that from the moment they arrived in the United States they started looking for their own place and for a community that could make them feel at home. Realizing that they were among the first Latinxs to arrive in Rhode Island, they saw the importance of building a community that would welcome and support future Latinx immigrants and that would promote the cultural heritage of their home countries. Over time, these women became leaders and activists recognized for providing

opportunities and advocating for the rights of the Latinx community to this day.

What are the struggles faced by Latina immigrant women in the U.S.?

As mentioned, the four women experienced difficulties in leaving the known behind and entering the unknown in a new country. In their stories they mentioned that they knew very little about the United States, its traditions and its weather, and most did not know English. They said that in the first days of their arrival they felt excitement but soon they began to experience cultural shock and struggles with assimilation.

It must be noted that the four women arrived at different moments in their lives, and in different conditions. In general, their departure from their countries of origin - the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Guatemala - was motivated by the socio-political and economic situations there. While the Dominican Republic lived through one of the longest-lasting dictatorships in Latin America until 1961, the Cuban revolution took place causing the fall of the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship and the coming to power of Fidel Castro. In Guatemala, a civil war occurred from 1960 to 1996, and from 1970 to 1978 there were a series of military dictators. The tension, fear, and political and economic instability in these countries motivated the first large waves of immigrants to the United States, among them Rosario, Castellanos, Salabert, and Escobar.

One of the most extreme cases in this study was that of Tessie, who as a child was the only one in the group who fled Cuba as a refugee without her parents and went on to live in foster homes. She and her siblings were sent to the U.S. on April 20, 1961 as a result of *Operación Pedro Pan* or “Operation Peter Pan” to avoid being taken from her family and sent to work cutting sugarcane out in the countryside of Cuba.

The rest were young women, and when they arrived in the United States they were accompanied by relatives or close people.

Some emphasized that they experienced inequity and discrimination. Julieta experienced a power dynamic in her work environment where her supervisor, in a position of power and authority over her, threatened her for intending to defend her rights and humiliated her for not knowing English. She and her Guatemalan colleagues were treated unequally in relation to English-speaking employees. Similarly, Olga described the unfair treatment that she and other women would receive for being Latina single mothers or for living alone or on public assistance. These stories support what the literature review reports and contribute to a more empathetic understanding of many immigrants' subaltern reality.

How do Latina immigrant women perceive and reconstruct a new sense of self after leaving their home countries?

As mentioned, the stories showed how a group of Latina immigrants came to the United States and remained here (some passed away after their stories were written), making it their new home and their new life. They emphasized how important family and unity was for them as they adapted and resettled to their new reality and expressed that they achieved their long-term goals of having a career and providing a home for their families. These women have been publicly recognized for their contributions to the Latinx immigrant community in Rhode Island, and their stories demonstrate the great positive impact that immigrants have on receiving societies. Furthermore, these stories spotlight that, although a lot has changed in the last 70 years, the reality of immigration has not changed so much, and the stories of immigrant women continue to be written – and unheard in the mainstream, in most cases. People keep moving around the world and looking for a better life overseas. That will not change given the unequal nature of our colonially shaped world. And as Tessie said in her story: “In many ways, I think things have changed but then things haven’t changed.”

Limitations and Future Research

One limitation of this study is that it only focused on four pre-written personal stories from Latina women from three different countries. To enhance the findings of this study, it is suggested for future research to conduct interviews with a broader group of participants. More current narratives that counter the negative media representations are much needed so that the inequities and discriminations that continue to harm immigrants can be highlighted and become a more prominent part of the mainstream discourse. Intercultural communication scholars can assist in this effort by upholding the voices of the immigrants themselves.

HEADING 6

CONCLUSION

I myself have been a Latina migrant. On many occasions, I have left my home country with a clear purpose and with a return date. My plans have never been to stay permanently in a foreign country. However, no matter how short or long my stays have been, my experiences as a Latina migrant abroad have always impacted my identity and the ways in which I perceive our globalized world. This research report not only analyzed the stories of Josefina, Olga, Julieta and Tessie to answer the research questions, but it also serves as a source of self-reflection for other immigrant and migrant women who feel they can identify with these women's experiences, and who seek to interpret how their experiences define who they are today.

Overall, this study sheds light on what it means to be a Latina immigrant in the United States, specifically in the 1950-1970s, and most importantly it challenges the negative representation that has been given to this segment of people in the U.S. media. The findings support the literature reviewed, acknowledge the occurrence of stereotypes regarding immigrant Latinas, and their struggles with discrimination, inequity and the English language in the new country. Also, the positive attributes and benefits of the Latinx community in the U.S. are highlighted, as are the details of how these four Latina women achieved their goal of resettling and building a new life in a "new home."

This research report contributes to the discipline of intercultural communication and to the larger conversation and knowledge on the construction of personal identities in the context of migration and issues of history, coloniality, and culture. What this study adds is the importance of the origins of the Latinx communities in the United States and specifically the implications of being a Latina pioneer such as Josefina Rosario, who has been credited with launching the first

wave of immigration from the Dominican Republic. Similarly, the stories of Castellanos, Salabert, and Escobar shed light on what it was like for these pioneer women to experience for the first time the phenomenon of migration and make a “home away from home” — something that is increasingly common and present in today’s globalized world, but which continues to be studied over time.

REFERENCES

- Alvarez, J. (1991). *How the García girls lost their accents*. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. *Public Culture*, 2(2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-2-2-1>
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern space, postcolonial times, and the trials of cultural translation. In H. K. Bhabha (Eds), *The location of culture* (pp. 212-235). London. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551>
- Burney, S. (2012). Toward a Pedagogy of the Other: Interculturalism, Inclusiveness, Interdisciplinarity. In Burney, S., *Pedagogy of the other: Edward Said, postcolonial theory, and strategies for critique* (pp. 195-208). Peter Lang AG.
- Cervantes, A., Alvord, D., & Menjivar, C. (2018). “Bad hombres”: The effects of criminalizing Latino immigrants through law and media in the rural Midwest. *Migration Letters*, 15(2), 182-196. Retrieved from: <https://eds-a-ebSCOhost-com.proxy.lib.siu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=a838c044-00e6-458a-9e1a-892b8985f881%40sdc-v-sessmgr03>
- Chuang, A., & Roemer, R. C. (2015). Beyond the positive–negative paradigm of Latino/Latina news-media representations: DREAM Act exemplars, stereotypical selection, and American Otherness. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, 16(8), 1045–1061. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884914550974>
- Esses, V., Medany, S., & Lawson, A. (2013). Uncertainty, threat and the role of the media in promoting the dehumanization of immigrants and refugees. *Journal of Social Issues*, 69(3), 518-536. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.siu.edu/10.1111/josi.12027>

- Esterberg, K. (2002). *Qualitative methods in social research*. University of Massachusetts-Lowell. McGraw-Hill. Retrieved from https://is.muni.cz/el/fss/podzim2013/GEN107/um/qualitative_methods_in_social_research.pdf
- Halualani, R. (2019). *Intercultural communication: A critical perspective*. San Diego, CA: Cognella Academic Publishing.
- International Organization for Migration. (2019). *Glossary on migration*. Geneva, Switzerland. ISSN 1813-2278. Retrieved from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf
- La Rocca, G. (2017). Media, migrants and human rights. *International Review of Sociology*, 27(2), 225-229. Retrieved from <https://search-ebshost-com.proxy.lib.siu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsbl&AN=vdc.100048744865.0x000001&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Lucero, M. (July 2000). Olga Escobar. Latina Pioneers. *Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island, Central Falls, RI*. Retrieved from <http://www.nuestrasraicesri.org/OlgaNoguera.html>
- Martinez, M. (n.d.). Nuestras Raices background. The History of Latinos in Rhode Island. Retrieved from <http://www.nuestrasraicesri.org/Background.html>
- Martinez, M., Sanchez, J., & Ziner, K. (May 1991). Josefina “Doña Fefa” Rosario. Latina Pioneers. *Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island, Central Falls, RI*. Retrieved from <http://www.nuestrasraicesri.org/DonaFefa1.html>

- Martinez, M. (January 2019). Julieta Marroquin Castellanos. Latina Pioneers. *Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island, Central Falls, RI*. Retrieved from <http://nuestrasraicesri.org/JulietaMarroquinCastellanos.html>
- Mercado-Thornton, R. (2013). First, second, and third personal speaking: A generational approach to understanding immigration. *Journal of Latino-Latin American Studies*, 5(1), 2-11. Retrieved from <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.proxy.lib.siu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=89428449&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Pieterse, J. N. (2020). *Globalization and culture: Global mélange*. (4th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Quinsaas, S. (2014). Competing news frames and hegemonic discourses in the construction of contemporary immigration and immigrants in the United States. *Mass Communication & Society*, 17(4), 537-596. doi:10.1080/15205436.2013.816742
- Quintas, M., & Martinez, M. (May 2013). Tessie Salabert. Latina Pioneers. *Latino Oral History Project of Rhode Island, Central Falls, RI*. Retrieved from <http://www.nuestrasraicesri.org/TessieSalabert1.html>
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Routledge & Kegan.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Steinberg, S. (2004). Undocumented immigrants or illegal aliens? Southwestern media portrayals of Latino immigrants. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 28(1), 109-133. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263258>

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology*, 13(1), 4-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00988593>
- Tazreiter, C. (2019). Narratives of crisis migration and the power of visual culture. In C. Menjivar, M. Ruiz, & I. Ness (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Migration Crises* (pp. 618–634). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190856908.013.50>
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2020). *International Migration 2020 Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/452). New York, USA.
Retrieved from
https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/un_desa_pd_2020_international_migration_highlights.pdf
- Zayani, M. (2011). Media, cultural diversity and globalization: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, 18(2), 48-54. Retrieved from <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.proxy.lib.siu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rzh&AN=108230652&site=eds-live&scope=site>

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Scarlett I. Rodriguez

Scarlett_r_2@hotmail.com

Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra
Bachelor of Science, Corporate Social Communication, February 2018

Research Paper Title:

Challenging the dominant representation of immigrant Latinas in the United States: A qualitative analysis of the personal stories of Latina pioneers from the 1950-1970s

Major Professor: Nilanjana Bardhan