



En Busca de Comunidad: Finding “Home” in Scholarly Fields

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Introduction

As a first-generation Cuban American, my passion for learning has always been rooted in making connections. This emphasis on building networks through knowledge is done in honor of my Cuban-born parents; who struggled to access education in their homeland. For me, the academic fields of sociology and psychology allow me to ask a multitude of “whys” and further examine them. This study investigates placemaking and community-building, specifically with Latinas in academia. I posit that these motions done by Latinas allows them to navigate the rigid spaces within Eurocentric institutions. As a Latina myself, it is a privilege to be able to highlight my community through my research, still remembering my family ties to Cuba. It is my belief that it helps knowing where you’re from to know where you’re going.

Research Questions

- What is the significance of placemaking and community for Latinas in scholarly fields?
- How does this relate in navigating Eurocentric institutions?

Methodology

- **Ethnographic Study**
 - Interviewed 2 doctoral students, 1 master’s student, and 1 faculty member.
 - Observed cultural values, beliefs, and perspective in social environment.
- **Secondary Analysis**
 - Reviewed literature focused on Latinas navigating scholarly spaces, such as higher education and museum art preservation.

Key Takeaways



Discussion

Implications

- This research defines the significance of placemaking as:
 - Finding community amongst peers in department with similar backgrounds (Rodriguez-Rivera, 2024).
 - Cultivating belonging with Hispanic/Latino faculty and graduate students (Reyes, 2005).
 - Restoring art, culture and sense of home (Casa Borges, interview with Estefania, 2023).
 - Creating a space for personal ties and voice in academic research (Reyes, 2021).

Future Directions

- Institutions can implement more initiatives that promote diversity in academia.
- Museums include work from artists that showcase their identities.
- Helps promote a sense of personal and professional growth amongst higher education faculty members and staff.

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