

THE JOB INTERVIEW SELF-PRESENTATION TENDENCIES AND EXPERIENCES
OF LATINA UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

by

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THE JOB INTERVIEW SELF-PRESENTATION TENDENCIES AND EXPERIENCES OF LATINA UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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University of Nebraska, 2019

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In the United States, self-promotion during a job interview is not just common, it is expected (Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez, & Harms, 2013). Job applicants are encouraged to inform potential employers about the qualifications, strengths, and professional accomplishments that make them the best fit for the job, which requires applicants to engage in self-promotion during the job interview. Literature has begun to suggest that sociocultural factors such as gender or culture may influence an individual's propensity to engage in modesty as opposed to self-promotion in career-related contexts like the job interview. However, few studies have explored how these sociocultural factors interact to influence career-related self-presentation. The present qualitative study explored the experiences of a sample of undergraduate Latina college students during job interview self-presentation. The findings suggest that participants demonstrate a propensity to engage in modest self-presentation during job interviews and that sociocultural factors (culture, gender, family) and specific experiences (career development and learning experiences, experiences of discrimination, experiences of positive and negative affect) may influence their self-presentation tendencies and experiences. It is the researcher's hope that the findings of this study will highlight the need for further research exploring

how race, ethnicity, and culture intersect with other sociocultural factors to impact career-related self-presentation.

PREVIEW

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family for all of their support and sacrifice. To my husband, Nick Shada...thank you for your unconditional support during this journey. You are an amazing partner, and I couldn't have done this without you. To my children, Alaina, Mia, and Nicholas...thank you for inspiring me to reach for the stars and for helping me find my own strength. To my parents, Mike and Kris Brockhoft...thank you for instilling in me the value of education and hard work. This all started with you.

PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Job applicants in the United States are expected to inform potential employers about the qualifications, strengths, and professional accomplishments that make them the best fit for the job, which requires applicants to engage in a process of self-promotion during the job interview. Self-promotion is an important task given that employers in the U.S. frequently rely more on job interviews during the hiring process than on paper credentials such as résumés (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Self-promotion is the “act of promoting one’s positive characteristics in an attempt to elicit attributions of competence” (Higgins & Judge, 2004, p. 623). In the context of a job interview, self-promotion includes “pointing with pride to one’s accomplishments, speaking directly about one’s strengths and talents, and making internal rather than external attributions for achievements” (Rudman, 1998, p. 629). In the United States, self-promotion during a job interview is not just common, it is expected (Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez, & Harms, 2013). Self-promotion behaviors have been found to be positively correlated with hiring and promotion decisions in the workplace (Paulhaus et al., 2013; Rudman, 1998) as well as impressions of job applicant competence (Dipboye & Wiley, 1977; Higgins & Judge, 2004). Furthermore, research suggests that self-promotion is positively related to a number of other successful career outcomes such as career advancement (Rudman, 1998) and effective networking (Budworth & Mann, 2010).

Within the context of the job interview, the opposite of self-promotion is modesty (Budworth & Mann, 2010). Cialdini and DeNicholas (1989) define modesty as “the under-representation of one’s positive traits, contributions, expectations, or

accomplishments” (p. 626). Previous research suggests that modesty tactics may increase a job applicant’s likability; however, modest self-presentation may have detrimental effects on the applicant’s perceived competence (Giacalone & Riordan, 1999). For example, potential employers may misinterpret an applicant’s modest self-presentation as low confidence or as lacking the qualifications required for the job. Within a context that relies on self-promotion, such as the American job interview, there can be significant consequences for modest self-presentation behaviors including loss of employment opportunities for job applicants and biased job selection outcomes for potential employers. Additionally, modest self-presentation may contribute to challenges in other career-related contexts such as salary negotiations, performance appraisals, or professional advancement opportunities.

Some literature (e.g., Paulhaus et al., 2013; Sandal et al., 2014; Budworth & Mann, 2010; Berg et al., 1981; Cialdini & DeNicholas, 1989) has begun to suggest that sociocultural factors such as gender or culture may influence an individual’s propensity to engage in modest self-presentation as opposed to self-promotion in career-related contexts like the job interview. However, few studies have explored how sociocultural factors interact to influence career-related self-presentation. The present study was designed to contribute to the research in this area by exploring the job interview self-presentation tendencies and experiences of a sample of undergraduate Latina college students.

Gender

Gender socialization appears to contribute to differences in the self-presentation styles of women and men (Budworth & Mann, 2010). According to social role theory,

behavioral differences are learned starting at a young age when girls and boys are taught to adhere to socially-constructed gender norms and are met with disapproval when they behave in ways inconsistent with these gender norms and expectations (Budworth & Mann, 2010). Gender socialization influences how women and men present themselves in career-related contexts. Although self-promotion may be an expectation for applicants during job interviews in the United States, the act of self-promotion aligns more with traditional masculine gender norms; whereas, acts of modesty and/or sharing credit with others align more with traditional feminine gender norms in the U.S. (Wosinska et al., 1996; Miller et al., 1992). Research suggests that women in the U.S. tend to under-represent their qualifications, strengths, and professional accomplishments while men generally promote their professional attributes (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Berg et al., 1981); this tendency has been coined the “feminine modesty effect” (Gould & Slone, 1982; Budworth & Mann, 2010). The feminine modesty effect is based on the assumption that society holds different expectations for how women and men should present themselves in achievement situations (Gould & Slone, 1982). Women are expected to present themselves with feminine modesty by downplaying their accomplishments in an effort to avoid being judged unfeminine; whereas, men are expected to promote their successes and present a successful self-image (Gould & Slone, 1982; Budworth & Mann, 2010). Gould and Slone (1982) suggest that the feminine modesty effect contributes to women’s presentation of relatively low self-expectations, decreased acceptance of responsibility for success, and greater acceptance of responsibility for failure compared to men.

The feminine modesty effect appears to contribute to disadvantages for women who are seeking employment, negotiating a salary, or seeking professional advancement in the workplace (Gould & Slone, 1982; Budworth & Mann, 2010). For example, research suggests that women who engage in modest self-presentation during job interviews are generally viewed as more socially attractive but less competent, which can translate into appearing unqualified for the position (Budworth & Mann, 2010; Rudman, 1998). With regards to salary negotiations, research indicates that women do not negotiate as effectively as men, not because they lack the skill for negotiations but because women tend to downplay their negotiation skills as well as their positive attributes and accomplishments during negotiations (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010). Furthermore, women who present themselves modestly in the workforce may risk not being recognized for their work. Research suggests that women tend to take less responsibility for successes and accept more responsibility for failures (Wosinska et al., 1996). As Budworth and Mann (2010) explain, “work that is not recognized is not compensated” (p. 180). The feminine modesty effect also appears to contribute to persistent workplace inequalities for women including less female representation in top management positions (Budworth & Mann, 2010).

While women who conform to the feminine modesty norm may face certain career barriers in terms of job interviews and employment, salary negotiations, performance appraisals, and professional advancement, women who counter the modesty norm and instead promote their positive attributes and achievements may face other kinds of challenges. For example, research by Rudman (1998) suggests that women who engage in self-promotion may suffer social backlash (be seen as less “socially attractive”)

for violating the feminine gender norm of modesty. Furthermore, a study by Smith and Huntoon (2014) found that women who violate the feminine modesty norm may experience “uncomfortable situational arousal” (e.g., nervousness, anxiety, discomfort) that leads to lower motivation to engage in self-promotion as well as lower levels of self-promotion on a self-presentation task. These studies suggest that for women modesty is a double-edged sword. Women who conform to the feminine modesty norm may face career barriers such as loss of employment opportunities, lower salaries, and fewer opportunities for career advancement; however, women who counter the feminine modesty norm may face social or psychological challenges.

Culture

To date, few studies have considered how sociocultural factors like race, ethnicity, and culture may influence self-presentation behaviors and career-related outcomes (Paulhaus et al., 2013; Sandal et al., 2014; Kang et al., 2016). However, consideration of cultural factors is essential in understanding the process of career development. A group’s culture defines norms and expectations that dictate what types of behavior are appropriate (Schmid Mast, Frauendorfer, & Popovic, 2011). Emerging research has begun to suggest that self-presentation tendencies may differ across cultures (Sandal et al., 2014). For example, Paulhaus and colleagues (2013) found that modesty is a value among East Asian cultures; East Asian individuals tend to present their strengths and accomplishments modestly in order to avoid diminishing the strengths and achievements of others (Sandal et al., 2014). Similarly, Chen, Bond, Chan, Tang, and Buchtel (2009) found that East Asian cultures utilize modesty as a means to promote intragroup harmony. In contrast, literature suggests that Western societies like the United

States tend to value self-promotion, assertiveness, and independence (Elliot, Chirkov, Kim, & Sheldon, 2001; Xin & Tsui, 1996). König and colleagues (2011) suggest that modesty values, or the extent to which modest behavior is endorsed, is a cultural norm that likely influences the degree to which individuals engage in modest self-presentation behaviors versus self-promotion.

Early research in this area suggests that self-presentation preferences and tactics are influenced by culture and that hiring decisions appear to be impacted by both job applicants' culturally-derived self-presentation behaviors and the cultural background and values of those making employment decisions (e.g., employment recruiters, interviewers; Paulhus et al., 2013; Schmid Mast et al., 2011; Deros, 2017). These preliminary findings suggest that cultural factors influence self-presentation tendencies and career-related outcomes; however, more research in this area is needed. Most of these studies have been conducted internationally, predominantly with samples from European or East Asian countries. Research within the United States has mainly utilized Caucasian participants and has failed to capture the racial-ethnic diversity and various cultures representative of job applicants and the workforce within the U.S. The lack of research with diverse racial-ethnic groups within the U.S. leaves a major void in the literature on career-related self-presentation.

Latinas: Culture, Gender, and Career Development

The present study expands the literature in this area by exploring the experiences of a sample of undergraduate Latina college students during job interview self-presentation. The study is grounded in a person-in-environment perspective, which suggests that career development is influenced and constructed within environmental

systems such as family, culture, community, workplace, and other environments (Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004). In other words, individuals develop in evolving historical and cultural contexts and in sociocultural interactions and relationships, and a vast array of influences shape learning, thinking, decision making, and behavior (Young & Collin, 2004). One such person-in-environment perspective is the Theoretical Model of Latina Career Development proposed by Gomez and colleagues (2001). The model suggests that Latinas' career development is influenced by four major constructs including the self; cultural, familial, and personal background variables; the immediate context; and current sociopolitical conditions. The self includes personal characteristics, life purpose, ethnic identity, gender identity, life philosophy, and life roles. Cultural, familial, and personal background variables reflect Latina cultural values, gender role socialization, familismo, and familial career aspirations. The immediate context considers challenges, opportunities, social supports, coping skills, and managing work and family. Sociopolitical conditions reflect Latina subgroup experiences as well as sociopolitical movements. The core category of the model is Latina's career-life path, which is created by the interaction of the four major constructs. In other words, Latinas' career-life path can be described as an implementation of the self within the immediate context, both of which have been influenced by culture, family background, and sociopolitical conditions. A visual representation of the proposed model can be found in Appendix A. The underlying assumptions of this theoretical model suggest that culture and gender, in combination with a number of other sociocultural and contextual variables, shape the self-presentation tendencies and experiences of Latinas in career-related contexts such as the job interview.

This line of research may be particularly salient for Latinas given the cultural values and traditional gender roles typically held within the Latinx culture, such as *marianismo*, *simpatía*, and *respeto*. *Marianismo* suggests that women should be modest, subordinate to others, and self-silencing (Miville, Mendez, & Louie, 2017); *simpatía* emphasizes that Latinas should maintain harmonious relationships facilitated by smooth and pleasant interactions; and *respeto* suggests that Latinas should display obedience and duty in deference to their status in a hierarchical structure (Piña-Watson et al., 2014). Latinas who embrace these cultural values and traditional Latina gender norms may be particularly likely to engage in modest self-presentation behaviors, which may contribute to career-related barriers for Latinas in terms of employment opportunities and outcomes, salary negotiation, and professional advancement. Despite these potential career barriers, and the fact that Latinas account for a sizable percentage (14.7 percent) of all women in the U.S. workforce (Mora, 2015), no previous research has examined the career-related self-presentation tendencies and experiences of Latinas in the U.S.

Significance of the Research Project

The present study contributed to the literature on self-presentation by exploring the experiences of a sample of undergraduate Latina college students' to learn more about the ways in which sociocultural factors such as culture and gender intersect to influence job interview self-presentation tendencies and experiences. Latinxs have largely been overlooked in the research on career-related self-presentation. However, Latinxs represent a major portion of the U.S. population and workforce. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), the U.S. population continues to grow more diverse each year, with Latinxs cited as one of the fastest growing racial-ethnic minority groups in the U.S.

(Arbona, 1990). In 2017, the Latinx population in the U.S. reached an all-time high of 57.5 million, which represents the largest racial-ethnic group after non-Hispanic white Americans (198.0 million) and is significantly larger than other racial-ethnic minority groups (African Americans, 46.8 million; Asian Americans, 21.4 million; Native American, Hawaiian, American Indian and other indigenous individuals, 8.2 million; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

According to Arbona (1990), the word Hispanic is used to describe a diverse group of people who share a history of Spanish colonialism in Latin American countries including Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other Central and South American countries. While Hispanic and Latinx are sometimes used interchangeably, some argue that the word Hispanic implies descendancy from Spain without accounting for the indigenous background of many people from Latin American countries (Steinberg, 2004). Due to the limiting nature of the word Hispanic, the present study will predominantly utilize the terms Latina, Latino, and Latinx. Latina refers to a woman of Latin American descent, Latino refers to a man of Latin American descent, and Latinx is a gender-neutral way to refer to a person of Latin American descent. Results from previous research and statements made by participants will be discussed utilizing the terminology consistent with the original source.

The present study explored the job interview self-presentation experiences of Latina undergraduate students utilizing a qualitative, phenomenological research design. A qualitative approach seemed appropriate for the proposed study given the lack of research on the self-presentation tendencies and experiences of Latinas. The use of a phenomenological approach that lends a voice to participants so that they may share their

lived experiences of the phenomenon reflected the underlying goals of this study. Qualitative methods align well with culturally sensitive research, as they allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words and from their perspectives and worldviews (Morrow, Castañeda-Sound, & Abrams, 2012). Furthermore, qualitative methods allow researchers to consider the complex, intersecting identities of individuals as well as the sociocultural contexts that may influence participant experiences (Lyons & Bike, 2010). Given the complexity of the intersecting sociocultural factors (e.g., culture, gender) that influence Latinas' job interview self-presentation, a qualitative, phenomenological approach seemed to be the best way to gain a holistic view of this phenomenon.

Present Study: Purpose Statement & Research Questions

The purpose of the present study was to explore the experiences of a sample of undergraduate Latina college students during job interview self-presentation. Specifically, this study explored participants' propensity to conform to the "feminine modesty effect," the sociocultural factors (e.g., culture, gender) that influence participants' self-presentation tendencies, and whether participants experience positive or negative affect as they engage in self-presentation. The study sought to answer the following research questions:

Primary Research Question

RQ1: What are the experiences of Latina undergraduate college students during job interview self-presentation?

Subquestions

RQ2: What are the job interview self-presentation tendencies (modesty, self-promotion) of Latina undergraduate college students?

RQ3: What sociocultural factors (e.g., culture, gender) influence the self-presentation tendencies and experiences of Latina undergraduate college students?

RQ4: Do Latina undergraduate college students experience any positive or negative affect as they engage in self-presentation during job interviews?

Conclusion

The present study contributed to the literature on self-presentation by exploring the experiences of a sample of undergraduate Latina college students' to learn more about the ways in which sociocultural factors such as culture and gender intersect to influence job interview self-presentation tendencies and experiences. This area of research may be particularly salient with Latinas given the cultural values and traditional gender roles (i.e., marianismo, simpatía, respeto) typically held within the Latinx culture; Latinas who embrace these values and roles may be particularly likely to engage in modest self-presentation behaviors, which may contribute to career-related barriers for Latinas in terms of employment opportunities and outcomes, salary negotiation, and professional advancement. Despite these potential career barriers, no previous research has examined the career-related self-presentation tendencies and experiences of Latinas in the U.S. The present study fills this void and calls attention to the need for further research exploring how race, ethnicity, and culture intersect with other sociocultural factors like gender to influence career-related self-presentation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review of the constructs relevant to the career-related self-presentation tendencies and experiences of Latinas. First, the chapter will define and discuss the constructs of impression management and self-presentation. While an overview of these areas will be provided, this section of the literature review will focus on the two self-presentation behaviors at the core of the proposed study: self-promotion and modesty. Second, the chapter will discuss how gender shapes an individual's career development and propensity to engage in self-promotion versus modesty including how the demonstration of various self-presentation behaviors (self-promotion, modesty) influences specific career-related outcomes for women. Third, this chapter will discuss how culture influences self-presentation tendencies (self-promotion versus modesty) and career-related outcomes. This section of the literature review will highlight the limited research on culture and self-presentation and will identify this as an important area for continued study. Finally, the chapter will present demographics about Latinas in the U.S. workforce and will discuss ways in which Latinas' cultural values and traditional gender roles may influence career development and career-related self-presentation.

Impression Management & Self-Presentation

The job interview has been one of the most frequently used methods of employment selection for the past century (Macan, 2009; Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson & Campion, 2014). The interview is often the only measure organizations utilize to screen job applicants (Derous, 2017; Levashina et al., 2014). Levashina and colleagues (2014) define job interview as “a personally interactive process of...asking questions