

An Exploratory Inquiry into the Role that Culture and Ethnicity Play in the Success of First-Generation Hispanic Entrepreneurs in the U.S.

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Hispanic-owned businesses are the fastest growing in the United States, and their growth contributes significantly to the creation of jobs, business ventures, and economic activity. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role that culture and ethnicity play in the success of first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs. The researcher used an exploratory qualitative approach to investigate the ethnic and cultural factors that contribute to the success of first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs. The results of this study indicate that ethnic and cultural factors of first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs such as language, cultural practices, religion, family support, beliefs, and community support play a significant role in their entrepreneurial success.

Keywords: Hispanic entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, culture, ethnicity, success.

Eksploracyjne badanie roli, jaką kultura i pochodzenie etniczne odgrywają w sukcesie przedsiębiorców należących do pierwszego pokolenia imigrantów latynoskich w Stanach Zjednoczonych

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Firmy latynoskie należą do najszybciej rozwijających się w Stanach Zjednoczonych, a ich rozwój znacząco przyczynia się do tworzenia miejsc pracy, podejmowania przedsięwzięć biznesowych i działalności gospodarczej. Celem niniejszego opracowania było zbadanie roli, jaką kultura i pochodzenie etniczne odgrywają w sukcesie przedsiębiorców należących do pierwszego pokolenia imigrantów latynoskich. Badaczka zastosowała jakościowe podejście badawcze w celu rozpoznania czynników etnicznych i kulturowych, które przyczyniają się do sukcesu przedsiębiorców należących do pierwszego pokolenia imigrantów latynoskich. Wyniki badania wskazują, że czynniki etniczne i kulturowe przedsiębiorców latynoskich, takie jak język, praktyki kulturowe, religia, wsparcie rodziny, przekonania i wsparcie społeczności odgrywają znaczącą rolę w osiągnięciu sukcesu w działalności przedsiębiorczej.

Słowa kluczowe: przedsiębiorcy latynosc, przedsiębiorczość, kultura, pochodzenie etniczne, sukces.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, government entities, researchers, and scholars have emphasized the importance of ethnic businesses' growth and economic contributions, directly associating the growth of ethnic business ownership with demographic growth (DiNapoli & Bleiwas, 2015; Fairlie, 2012; Hohn, 2012). The number of Hispanic-owned businesses has increased to more than 4 million (Geoscape, 2015). Based on demographic projections, the Hispanic population in the United States will reach 120.8 million by 2060 (Aguinis & Joo, 2014). Consequently, the number of Hispanic-owned businesses is also expected to increase. Demographic and ethnic business growth projections related to Hispanics in the United States led to the academic interest in the topic of Hispanic entrepreneurship. Immigrant entrepreneurship is an essential economic factor in the United States because it contributes to the nation's wealth and job creation through new business ventures (Lofstrom, 2017). Thus, understanding entrepreneurial success factors is a topic of importance to researchers, scholars, and entrepreneurs (Hopp & Sonderegger, 2015).

In the United States, the Hispanic community is the largest minority group and represents 17.7% of the total population (Price & Khubchandani, 2016). Consequently, the growth of Hispanic entrepreneurship activity in the United States contributes significantly to job creation and business ventures. However, the literature available on Hispanic entrepreneurs suggests that academic research on the topic is limited (Canedo, Stone, Black, & Lukaszewski, 2014; Suárez, 2016). Therefore, the findings in a study on the impact that ethnic and cultural factors may have on the success of first-generation Hispanic-owned businesses can add significant value to the field of management and entrepreneurship, while at the same time contributing to the body of literature on the subject.

1.1. Purpose and significance of the Study

The study was intended to determine factors that may have led to Hispanic business success, such as culture and ethnicity. The central topic of this study was entrepreneurship as it relates to Hispanic business owners. Entrepreneurship is often studied from the perspective of different theoretical lenses which are based on psychological and personality traits, social models, and socioeconomic factors that influence the success of the entrepreneur (Amiri & Marimaei, 2012). A review of the literature about entrepreneurship theory yielded various theories of entrepreneurship; such variety is due to lack of consensus on the characteristics of the entrepreneur (Bula, 2012). For example, Schumpeter's 1908 theory saw the entrepreneur as the innovator, while Marshall, in 1949, focused on men who established equilibrium in the market (Bula, 2012). One of the gaps identified in the literature is that few theories focus on Hispanic entrepreneurship and

the influence that cultural and ethnic factors play on the success of Hispanic entrepreneurs. Consequently, social marginality theory, the theory that informed this study, defines the *entrepreneur* as a person who reconstructs his or her reality by choosing self-employment (Mehretu et al., 2000).

2. Literature Review

The role of small business in the U.S. economy is significant. Researchers have found that small enterprises are critical in promoting social and economic development as they promote job creation (Salyakhov, Zagidullina, Fakhрутdinova, & Aleshina, 2015). Researchers and scholars referred to small business owners as entrepreneurs (Dahmen & Rodriguez, 2014). Entrepreneurs in the United States “contribute 46% of the gross domestic product (GDP), provide 49.2% of private sector employment, and make up 99.7% of U.S. employer firms” (Dahmen & Rodriguez, 2014, p. 30).

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau Survey of Business Owners revealed that Hispanic-owned businesses were the fastest growing business segment before the recession, comprising 2.3 million businesses. Between 2007 and 2015, the number of Hispanic-owned businesses grew 57%; this indicates there are approximately 4.07 million Hispanic-owned firms in the United States (Geoscape, 2015). The growth rate of Hispanic-owned businesses represents more than 15 times the national growth rate of all businesses in the country (Geoscape, 2015). While the research on Hispanic-owned businesses is limited, and few theories focused on the factors affecting or contributing to the success of Hispanic entrepreneurs (Miles, 2012), some of the existing research addresses the outcome of entering entrepreneurship but not success factors (Bishop & Surfield, 2013). In particular, how culture and ethnicity influence those factors. Moreover, other research on the subject focused on ethnic rather than cultural values, and such inferences may lead to erroneous information because they do not include Hispanic subgroups such as Mexicans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans (Canedo et al., 2014).

2.1. Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to people who share similar customs. Santos, Palomares, Normando, and Quintao (2010) explained that the term *ethnicity* stems from the Greek noun *ethnos*, meaning *foreign people*. Kasturirangan et al. (2004) explained: “the terms race, ethnicity, and culture are often used interchangeably to describe the experiences of non-White groups” (p. 320). Siatkowski (2007) explained that Hispanic ethnicity involves the Spanish language, spirituality, the importance of family, collectivism, and respect for the elderly. Siatkowski added that “Hispanic ethnicity includes individuals originating from Mexico, Central America, parts of the Caribbean (Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico), and most of South America” (p. 319).

2.2. Culture

Some of the terms identified thus far, such as *entrepreneur* and *success*, lack universal definitions, mainly due to a lack of consensus among researchers and scholars. The same applies to the term *culture*. For example, Craig and Douglas (2006) stated, “The complexity of culture is reflected in the multitude of definitions of culture” (p. 323). Craig and Douglas added that the most accepted definition of *culture* “is that given by Taylor (1881) who described culture as ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’” (p. 324). *Culture* can simply be defined as “behavior and how it changes over time” (Uy, 2009, p. 32). However, Sternberg (2007) defined *culture* as “the traditions of a group, normatively to express rules and norms of a group, psychologically to emphasize how a group learns and solves problems, structurally to emphasize the organizational elements of a culture, and genetically to describe cultural origins” (p. 149). *Culture* is also defined as “beliefs, practices, values, norms, and behaviors that are shared by members of a group” (Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004, p. 319). Kasturirangan et al. (2004) further explained that culture also refers to the way in which individuals and groups interpret their environments.

2.3. Business Success

The definition of success is as diverse as the definition of *entrepreneurship*, mainly because definitional factors depend on the context in which the term is being used (Kirkwood, 2016). However, there is a certain level of consensus among business researchers and scholars that success, no matter how the term is defined, “has to be exhibited and measured over a reasonable length of time” (Foster, 2010, p. 158). In this study, success refers to the longevity of the enterprise, in specific, a business that has operated for six years or more. Lekovic and Maric (2015) explained that arriving at a definition of *success* in some cases has been based on financial performance, increased personal income and wealth, as well as freedom and independence. Van Sheers (2016) explained that entrepreneurial success could just be measured by the reasons entrepreneurs decide to start businesses or by the way entrepreneurs manage information. Other researchers suggest that vision and passion are simple factors of entrepreneurial success (Minarcine & Shaw, 2016). Guettabi (2015) found that determining success is often measured by the size of the organization, the number of employees, or owned assets. Minarcine and Shaw (2016) found that *success* has different meanings for different entrepreneurs; for some, success means security, happiness, financial security, quality of life, and the ability to make financial choices.

2.4. Hispanic Entrepreneurship

There is a high propensity for immigrants to start businesses in the United States. Immigrants often migrate from their native countries to a more economically developed country seeking employment opportunities. Once in the host country, factors such as lack of opportunities in the labor market, exclusion from employment that offers a competitive salary, discrimination, and lack of skill transferability influence the immigrant's decision to engage in entrepreneurial activity as a means of employment (Fray, 2014). In the United States, many factors influence entrepreneurial activity among Hispanics, for example, necessity dictated by the socioeconomic circumstances of the entrepreneur. As Chrysostome and Arcand (2009) explained, the term *necessity immigrant entrepreneur* refers to immigrants who undertake a business venture as a method of economic activity to overcome obstacles that prevent them from having access to the job market in the host country. This type of entrepreneurial activity is a method of surviving in the host country. Van der Zwan, Thurik, Verheul, and Hessels (2016) believed that some immigrants engage in entrepreneurial activity as a means to survive in the host country. Thus, research conducted in the field of entrepreneurship indicates that necessity rather than opportunity is what motivates Hispanics to engage in entrepreneurial activity.

2.5. Hispanic Entrepreneurs

Immigrant entrepreneurs play an essential role in the economy of the United States due to their contribution to employment and economic wealth. In the early 2000s, the entry rate of Hispanics into entrepreneurship was higher than that of Whites (Bishop & Surfield, 2013). An individual's motivation to enter business ownership is often based on push and pull factors. The push and pull factors also influence Hispanic entrepreneurial activity. In a study conducted by Bishop and Surfield (2013), the researchers found that respondents in their study identified pull factors (ethnic enclave, the attractiveness of self-employment, higher earnings, independence, and flexibility) as having a more significant influence on their decision to become entrepreneurs than push factors. The literature (Beeka & Rimmington, 2011; Bishop & Surfield, 2013) revealed that the push and pull factors are somewhat consistent with the motivations of individuals entering entrepreneurship. For example, Fray (2014) suggested immigrants are pushed into self-employment because of discrimination in the labor market, lack of information about the labor market, lack of skill transferability, and insufficient language proficiency. There is a consensus among scholars and researchers that suggests entrepreneurial motivation is based on both push and pull factors. Liu (2012) explained that "people can be pulled into entrepreneurship by opportunity or pushed into self-employment by

necessity” (p. 1250003-3). Liu also found that specific factors are influencing Hispanic entrepreneurs to enter self-employment, such as family traditions and creating a business for one’s children to inherit.

2.6. Entrepreneurship

The growth of academic research in the field of entrepreneurship has contributed to the various definitions of the term (Audretsch, 2012). Mohamad, Lim, Yusof, Kassim, and Abdullah (2014) described entrepreneurship as the capacity of taking risks while managing a productive venture with the goal of seeking profit as a reward. *Entrepreneurship* is all about making decisions, initiatives, innovations, and taking a risk in a business venture to generate profit (Cadar & Badulescu, 2015). Cadar and Badulescu (2015) stated that entrepreneurship is a production factor related to risk and compensation. The authors noted that defining *entrepreneurship* was based on organizational criteria such as business size, type of ownership, and years of operation. The issue with identifying a holistic definition of *entrepreneurship* is the same as determining a global definition for the term *entrepreneur*: lack of consensus among scholars. The material available on a definition of *entrepreneurship* is varied and highly controversial due to a lack of consensus on a global definition. While in its purest form, *entrepreneurship* is defined as the founding or creation of a new business venture (Burton, Sorensen, & Dobrey, 2016), other researchers provide a more holistic definition; Osiris, McCarthy, Davis, and Osiris (2015) stated,

Easton (1977) defined entrepreneurship as including, “new venture initiation, acquisitions, and new major developments by either large or small firm.” He further noted that “‘enterprise’ development is intended to emphasize the development, revitalization, and growth of the smaller enterprise, rather than just management of such firm.” (p. 2)

2.7. Entrepreneurs

Human and economic activity in the 1700s led to changes in work activity and workplace activity, resulting in the evolution of the entrepreneur. While the term *entrepreneur* was recognized by Irish-French economist Richard Cantillon as early as 1725, it was Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter who further developed and defined the term (Bula, 2012). Bula (2012) noted that for Schumpeter, the entrepreneur was a creative innovator. According to Schumpeter’s theory, entrepreneurs are the driving force of growth and economic development due to their willingness to innovate as they pursue economic activity (Audretsch, 2012). Furthermore, from a Schumpeterian approach, the entrepreneur is a creative individual who, to succeed, finds the means to create new products or services to corner the market (Imas, Wilson, & Weston, 2012).

So, what is an entrepreneur? Who becomes an entrepreneur? There is a lack of consensus among economists, scholars, and researchers as to the definition of *entrepreneur*. The fragmentation of the academic material available on entrepreneurs has contributed to the various interpretations and definitions of the term to the point that some academics may disregard the small business owner or self-employed as entrepreneurs (Walter & Heinrich, 2015). One of the many definitions of the term describes the entrepreneur as a person who is self-employed and owns his or her own business (Schoon & Duckworth, 2012). The *entrepreneur*, as defined by Lewin (2015), is a person with a vision who sees an opportunity and acts on it to start a new business venture. Gutiérrez and Ortin-Ángel (2016) defined the *entrepreneur* as the founder and manager of a small enterprise. Per Walter and Heinrich (2015), an entrepreneur is “an individual independently owning and actively managing a business” (p. 226). Bishop and Surfield (2013) defined the *entrepreneur* as a person who seeks self-employment for economic gain. Cadar and Badulescu (2015) stated the entrepreneur is an innovator and business owner who takes risks and adapts to economic changes. Furthermore, Cadar and Badulescu considered the entrepreneur to be a business owner who seeks the expansion of the enterprise beyond local conditions. An entrepreneur is a businessperson who initiates new ventures to pursue his or her ideas or economic independence (Crump, Singh, & Wilbon, 2015).

2.8. Social Marginality Theory

Scholars have used different theories to study entrepreneurship. However, no one single unifying entrepreneurship theory encompasses an explanation of the entire entrepreneurial process (Audretsch, 2012; Mishra & Zachary, 2015). Some of the most commonly cited theories of entrepreneurship include the classical works of Cantillon, Say, and Marshall (Bula, 2012). However, much of the work is attributed to Schumpeter’s theory of economic development. Rather than adopting one of the commonly used entrepreneurship theories to explain the unique circumstances experienced by first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs, this study used the social marginality theory; in specific, the social-spatial marginality theory as developed by Mehretu et al. (2000). Social-spatial marginality is a typology of marginality based on two primary factors: contingent marginality and systemic marginality. Contingent marginality results from inequalities that affect “individuals and communities that are least prepared to negotiate the marketplace for reasons of unattractive locations, cultural restrictions, inadequate labor skills, and lack of useful information about opportunities” (Mehretu et al., 2000, p. 90). Systemic marginality results from disadvantages experienced by individuals in a socially constructed system of discrimination. In such a system of discrimination, the hegemonic order exercises excessive

power and control over people based on their class, ethnicity, age, sex, race, culture, and immigrant status, resulting in exclusion and marginalization (Mehretu et al., 2000).

2.9. Entrepreneurship Through Social Marginalization

Marginality theories, such as the one developed by Hagen (1963), introduced the notion that entrepreneurs emerge from marginalized members of society who experienced discrimination and, as a result, engage in entrepreneurial activity. Many studies have been conducted in which researchers addressed the issue of immigrants overcoming social marginalization through entrepreneurship (Acheampong, 2013; Frederick & Foley, 2006; Williams & Horodnic, 2015). For example, Hjerm (2004) studied immigrant entrepreneurs in Sweden and found that immigrants who engage in entrepreneurial activities are self-sufficient and do not need to rely on unemployment benefits, social assistance, or any other type of social services for survival. Frederick and Foley (2006) explained that entrepreneurs are likely to emerge from groups of people who are deprived or marginalized in their societies. As a result, marginalized individuals often experience social and individual disadvantage, geographic disadvantage, cultural disadvantage, economic disadvantage, and political disadvantage.

Despite the limited application of marginality theory to entrepreneurship studies, scholars and researchers in the field of entrepreneurship have applied social marginality theory to studies concerning immigrant entrepreneurship. For example, Acheampong (2013) conducted a study to explore marginality in relationship to immigrant entrepreneurs in Ghana. In the study, Acheampong hypothesized that “individuals who are marginalized in society react to this marginality by setting up enterprises as they do not have opportunities in the formal job market in the dominant culture” (p. 10). However, the findings of the study revealed that rather than succumbing to the various levels of marginalization immigrants face in host nations, the participants of Acheampong’s study dismissed any signs of marginality by assuming a defiant reaction to marginality, which consequently led to entrepreneurial activity. A study conducted by Williams and Horodnic (2015) concerning self-employment in the informal economy showed “the propensity of the self-employed to operate in the economy is greater among marginalized populations” (p. 235). Boubekour (2016) conducted a study of Muslim entrepreneurs in Europe to explain how marginalized Muslims respond to marginality through entrepreneurship. Boubekour found that new Muslim entrepreneurs see entrepreneurship as a means to overcome marginalization and discrimination in the Western world. Boubekour’s findings indicate that in addition to achieving integration through entrepreneurship, young Muslim entrepreneurs display strong motivation to engage in political and civic participation in the host country.

3. Research Methods

The design selected for the study was an exploratory qualitative inquiry approach, which was used to explore those ethnic and cultural factors that contribute to the success of Hispanic entrepreneurs. Austin and Sutton (2014) explained that “qualitative research is concerned with participants’ experiences of a life event, and the aim is to interpret what participants have said to explain why they have said it” (p. 437). The framework selected dictated the appropriate methodology for the research. A qualitative approach was chosen for this research inquiry because qualitative studies “address ambiguous phenomena, generate rich evidence from the everyday experience, and focus on context” (Birchall, 2014, p. 1). Furthermore, an exploratory qualitative inquiry permitted the researcher to explore more efficiently the experiences of the participants (Birchall, 2014).

The study utilized interpretative analysis to find connections between theoretical concepts and specific topics that emerged from participants’ responses. Interpretative research “promotes the value of qualitative data in pursuit of knowledge” (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 434). When using interpretative analysis, the researcher seeks to understand how the participants in the study make sense of their experiences (Back, Gustafsson, & Berterö, 2014). The insights gained by the researcher were then used “to contrast similarities and differences inserted in the speeches of the participants” (dos Santos, Neves, & Carnevale, 2016, p. 179). In this exploratory qualitative inquiry, the researcher employed a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The 17 participants were purposively selected to provide information concerning the ethnic and cultural factors that contribute to the success of Hispanic entrepreneurs. Through the utilization of 17 semi-structured telephonic interviews, the goal of this study was to gather those factors interpretation and categorization of themes from participants’ interview responses.

3.1. Population

The population for this qualitative exploratory study consisted of Hispanic business owners, who were purposively selected based on the research criteria. The inclusion criteria for this study were (a) first-generation Hispanic business owners currently in business, (b) who started and maintained their businesses for six years or more, and (c) had no relation to the researcher. All participants were first-generation Hispanic immigrants (born outside of the United States). Furthermore, there were no specific requirements regarding the industries or entities operated by the participants. This broad scope provided the opportunity for a variety of business owners and circumstances to be captured in this study rather than focusing on a specific industry.

3.2. Sample

The sample size in this study consisted of 17 participants who were identified as meeting the criteria to participate in the study. The population sample for this study consisted of first-generation Hispanic business owners who had operated a business for at least six years. Both males and females were represented in the sample of 17 participants, and there was a nearly equal representation of both sexes in the study. The age of the female participants ranged between 25 and 61, while the age of the male participants ranged between 34 and 60.

As shown in Table 1, the number of years of operation for the participants in this study ranged from six to over 31 years. The data collected in this study indicated that males operated businesses longer than females. Moreover, no females were found to have run a business for more than 20 years.

Research participant ID	Sex	Age	Country of origin	Industry	Geographic location of business	Years of business ownership
RP01	M	48	Chile	Automotive	Northeast	20
RP02	M	49	Cuba	Automotive	Northeast	36
RP03	F	45	Mexico	Real estate	West	14
RP04	M	35	Cuba	Healthcare	Southeast	6
RP05	M	35	Colombia	Martial arts	Southeast	20
RP06	F	25	Mexico	Retail	Northeast	6
RP07	M	57	Puerto Rico	Technology	Southeast	6
RP08	F	47	Guatemala	Education/retail	Northeast	14
RP09	F	47	Mexico	Foodservice	Midwest	14
RP10	F	43	Mexico	Education	West	7
RP11	F	27	Mexico	Technology	West	6
RP12	M	60	Mexico	Communications	West	23
RP13	F	46	Dominican Republic	Legal	Northeast	11
RP14	F	43	Colombia	Communications	Southeast	15
RP15	M	40	Dominican Republic	Foodservice	Southeast	6
RP16	M	34	Mexico	Technology	Midwest	6
RP17	F	61	Panama	Marketing	West	20

Tab. 1. Participant Demographics. Source: prepared by the researcher.

3.3. Data Collection

The target population for this study was Facebook users, first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs who had owned and operated an enterprise for longer than six years. Because the participants of this study were Facebook users, the geographic location of the participants varied. Hence the use of telephonic interviews. Targeting Facebook users to participate in this study was consistent with a study conducted by Balfe, Doyle, and Conroy (2012), who found that using the Internet to recruit participants allows researchers to have access to “hard-to-reach populations” (p. 511). Data collection included one-on-one audio-recorded telephone interviews. The researcher interviewed the participants by asking semi-structured questions related to this study’s research question. The participants’ responses were captured using a digital audio-recording device and the researcher’s notes. Using the telephone as a medium in this qualitative exploratory inquiry provided rich qualitative textual data. The interviews in this study were transcribed by two professional transcription companies, and each participant was given the opportunity to review his or her transcript to change, clarify, or add information to the responses. This is a process known as member checking and is used to enhance the credibility of the research and reduce bias (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016; Simpson & Quigley, 2016). For accuracy purposes, the researcher also conducted a line-by-line review of each transcript while listening to the audio recording.

3.4. Guiding Interview Questions

The selected interview method for this study was semi-structured telephone interviews. A semi-structured interview is a technique used by qualitative researchers that permits the elicitation of facts and knowledge concerning the topic under investigation (Mojtahed, Nunes, Martins, & Peng, 2014). This interview method also permits a conversational flow of information between the participant and researcher, giving the researcher the opportunity to seek additional information and the participant the freedom to expand on his or her responses (Mojtahed et al., 2014). This study utilized interpretative analysis to find a connection between theoretical concepts and specific topics that emerged from the participants’ responses. When using interpretative analysis, the researcher seeks to understand how the participants in the study make sense of their experiences (dos Santos et al., 2016). During this process, different categories of themes were extracted from the participants’ interviews based on the theoretical concept of marginalization. The constructs of entrepreneurship, culture, ethnicity, and theory are shown in Table 2 with their relationship to each interview question.

Questions	Construct						
	Entrepreneurship	Ethnicity	Culture	Theory	Barriers	Demographics	Social marginalization
What are the circumstances that afforded you the opportunity to start your own business?	✓						
What factors played a critical role in your choosing this line of business?	✓	✓	✓				
Did your culture influence your pursuit of a business venture?	✓	✓	✓				
What aspects of your background give you an edge in this type of industry?	✓		✓				
How did you obtain the financial resources to start up?	✓						
Have you observed any differences between your business growth and non-Hispanic businesses in the same area?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Why did you choose the location you have for your business?	✓	✓	✓			✓	
What role do your culture and ethnicity play in the success of your business?	✓	✓		✓			
What factors related to your culture or ethnicity hinder your success?	✓	✓	✓				✓
How have you overcome barriers to growing your business?	✓	✓		✓			✓
What are your future plans/goals for the business?	✓						
Have you owned any businesses that closed prior to being active for five years?	✓				✓	✓	✓

Tab. 2. Interview Protocol. Source: prepared by the researcher.

4. Analysis

When data analysis is conducted, the data go through necessary stages that include data familiarization (review, reading, listening), transcription of taped interviews, data organization, coding, identification of themes, data analysis, data interpretation, and so forth (Sutton & Austin, 2015). In conducting this qualitative exploratory study, the researcher employed six steps to analyze the data: (a) preparation and organization of the data for analysis, (b) listening and reading through the data, (c) coding the data, (d) analyzing the data, (e) describing the data, and (f) interpreting the data.

Preparation and organization of the data. The first step in this stage of the data analysis process was to print a copy of the interview transcripts. All participants were assigned an alphanumeric code to protect their identities. The interview transcripts were sent to the respective participants for their review to correct or amplify the information provided during the interviews.

Listening and reading through the data. During this stage of the analysis, the researcher carefully listened to the audio recordings of each interview while simultaneously reading the transcripts. By conducting a simultaneous review of the audio recordings and transcripts, the researcher was able to note inaccuracies and mitigate some of the challenges described by Markel, West, and Rich (2011), such as efficiency, trustworthiness, and accuracy.

Coding the data. Theron (2015) explained a *code* is “a descriptive construct designed by the researcher to capture the primary content or essence of the data” (p. 4). The researcher employed the *in vivo* method to code the data. According to Saldaña (2013), manual coding gives qualitative researchers more control and ownership of the work; as such, using *in vivo* as a coding method is valuable to qualitative researchers because the researcher uses the participants’ words or phrases to code the data. However, most importantly, this method prioritizes the participants’ voices (Saldaña, 2013). In conducting the data analysis for the study, repeated codes were an indicator of emerging patterns.

Analysis of the data. After conducting a manual analysis of the data, the researcher used a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) known as NVivo to conduct additional analysis of the data. There is a vast amount of literature on the usage of CAQDAS, and researchers such as Rettie, Robinson, Radke, and Ye (2008) explained that CAQDAS facilitates “data reduction; systematic coding; effective searching; [and] the analysis of large datasets” (p. 77). In this study, NVivo served as a support tool in managing the 17 interview transcripts and identifying emerging themes (Carcary, 2011). In both the manual and computerized analysis of the data, the researcher used two methods to code emerging concepts. First, the researcher used *in vivo* codes that were extracted directly from statements made by the participants (Carcary, 2011; Saldaña, 2013). Second, the researcher used *in vitro* codes, which “are terms the researcher

creates to encapsulate a concept discussed by an informant [participant]" (Carcary, 2011, p. 16).

Analyzing themes. A theme in qualitative studies is a descriptive concept that, when organized as a "group of repeating ideas ... enables researchers to answer the study questions" (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016, p. 101). Moreover, when themes are analyzed, they provide an interpretative description of the topic under investigation (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). The analysis of themes in this study was performed by emphasizing the participants' feelings, perceptions, and experiences related to the topic under investigation.

Memoing researcher's journal. Memoing is a critical tool in analyzing qualitative data and "serves to assist the researcher in making conceptual leaps from raw data to those abstractions that explain research phenomena in the context in which it is examined" (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008, p. 68). In simple terms, memos are notes to oneself that serve as a reminder of crucial information learned by the researcher during data collection. In this study, memoing included the researcher's reflections on the data collection process and notes taken during each interview.

Data description. In describing the data, the researcher created a narrative that presented the original data to include specific characteristics about the participants such as sex, age, country of origin, city, and state in which the participants operated their enterprises, as well as the type of industry. Subsequently, the researcher presented the results of the data analysis with written text and corresponding tables. The researcher also presented the themes identified in the data collection and provided excerpts from the interviews to support each theme.

Data interpretation. Interpretation of the data "means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of the findings, offering explanations ... and drawing conclusions" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 219). As Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested, in interpreting the data, the researcher evaluates the data for its usefulness regarding the topic of interest. The analysis of the data was interpreted to give meaning to the information collected during this study.

4.1. Results of the Analysis

A total of four themes emerged from the data analysis. Each of the themes presented in this section is supported by participants' responses to the interview questions. The quotes extracted from the data served the purpose of further explicating each theme. The constructs of success are directly related to the research question and serve the important purpose of further explicating the findings in the study in response to the research question.

1. Theme 1: Knowledge of Industry

Most of the participants expressed having had some knowledge and experience in their respective industries before formalizing the operation of their enterprises. Table 3 contains information about the number of instances in which participants spoke of factors related to knowledge of the industry.

Knowledge of industry	No. of references	Participants
Training	26	RP01, RP02, RP03, RP05, RP08, RP09, RP10, RP15
Formal education	38	RP01, RP02, RP03, RP04, RP07, RP08, RP09, RP10, RP11, RP13, RP14, RP16
Work experience	29	RP01, RP03, RP05, RP07, RP08, RP09, RP10, RP11, RP12, RP14, RP15, RP16
Products & services	17	RP02, RP05, RP06, RP07, RP08, RP10, RP12, RP13, RP15, RP16, RP17
Information	63	RP01, RP02, RP03, RP05, RP06, RP07, RP08, RP09, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP15, RP16
Customers' cultural needs	24	RP07, RP08, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17
Cultural business strategies	11	RP05, RP07, RP09, RP11, RP12, RP17
Location & market	72	RP01, RP02, RP03, RP04, RP05, RP06, RP07, RP08, RP09, RP10, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17

Tab. 3. Theme 1: Knowledge of Industry. Source: prepared by the researcher.

The theme knowledge of industry encompassed the personal stories of the participants concerning the circumstances that led them into their respective fields of operation and consequently into entrepreneurship. For example, RP01 stated his father taught him the business in their native country, and they brought that knowledge and experiences to the United States where they initiated a business venture in a highly populated minority community. In discussing the influence that prior knowledge and experiences have on the success of their enterprises, participants shared the following:

This business was started by my father ... who came from Cuba. I took over in 1992 ... I have some natural inclinations to do it, but, uh, you know, the family business, uh, the family being involved in it already was certainly a contributing factor. (RP02)

So, I was a little familiar with it. My sister was working as a loan officer, um, and I, and I've always liked it. Um, I've had, like, family members that do flips and, and so I've always, you know, um, you know, I've always liked it. (RP03)

RP08 stated,

I went to school to become a teacher. I have been working in different school settings. I also have support centers to work with some of the families one-to-one. I was going to their homes and getting to know all them. Anyway, I got a lot of experience in different schools, and I decided that the way that I could help out more children was by doing my consulting.

RP12 stated,

Then I worked ... [at] a public radio [station ... and I noticed that people did not know what was happening because there was a newspaper in English, there was a Spanish radio [station] and a Spanish TV [station], but they did not give news here; the news we received in Spanish was from Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Chicago. And then I said, "If I already know the Imperial Valley, then make a newspaper," and that is what a friend of mine advised me to do. And so, I started in '94.

RP16 explained he gained experience in his field of business operation while in college:

When I started college ... I was fixing computers for my friends and for school. They didn't know how to fix them, so they would approach me. I would charge them 20 [dollars] for it [or] they'll buy me lunch sometime. ... Eventually ... I ended up opening my own business.

II. Theme 2: Cultural Awareness

Taking into consideration the topic under investigation, all participants touched on the subject of culture. They spoke of their cultural heritage, family, the Hispanic community and its people, as well as language. Many of the participants spoke about the impact that their culture has had on the success of their businesses. Others discussed that being a member of the community and serving the community has given them a significant advantage over similar businesses that are non-Hispanic. Table 4 depicts information about the number of times the participants of this study discussed aspects of culture as it relates to their businesses.

A considerable percentage of the participants spoke about the Spanish language and how valuable knowledge of the language has been in the

creation of their businesses and overall success. For example, RP01 stated that aspects of his culture, such as the Spanish language, helped him to export his business from his native country to the United States where he can serve the Spanish-speaking community. RP01 added that being able to communicate with Hispanic clients in Spanish contributes to the success and continuation of his business.

Cultural awareness	No. of references	Participants
Language	38	RP01, RP02, RP03, RP05, RP09, RP10, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17
Practices	16	RP05, RP12, RP13, RP14
Family	66	RP02, RP03, RP04, RP05, RP06, RP07, RP08, RP09, RP10, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15, RP16
Community	34	RP02, RP03, RP04, RP05, RP07, RP09, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15, RP16
Beliefs	15	RP09, RP10, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17
Religion	7	RP05, RP10, RP11
Values	14	RP03, RP06, RP07, RP09, RP14, RP17

Tab. 4. Theme 2: Cultural Awareness. Source: prepared by the researcher.

Similarly, RP03 stated that knowing the Spanish language and knowing Hispanics' spending patterns and the things that are important to them give her a tremendous advantage in her line of business and overall success. RP03 added that culture plays a significant role in the success of her business because "I am ... able to target more people. ... I am able to gain their trust."

RP10 shared her experiences:

I think being a member of my culture definitely gave me the push that I needed to do this because we are such a culture of group dynamics and family support that I knew that if I failed in this business, I was never going to be homeless and I was never going not to have food to eat because I have an extended family who was always there to support you. And so, I didn't have many of the worries that some people do when they launch businesses. ...

The fact that I can connect with students because of the nurturing aspect of our culture ... I don't have to worry about being fed or having a roof over my head. So that allows me to not only to keep going in the business but to actually make some money and a little bit of profit doing it.

RP13 stated,

My culture influences my work every day. I think that people, when they come to me, and they realize that I'm Hispanic, no matter whether I'm dealing with a Mexican, whether I'm dealing with a Guatemalan, whether I'm dealing with an Argentinean, they love the fact that they can communicate with me and that I understand them, because I understand their culture.

In speaking about the role culture plays in the success of her business, RP14 stated that culture “allows me to be more diverse and agiler when it comes to working with clients and coming up with campaigns. I think it’s probably one of the most important factors in my success.”

RP16 also spoke about the role that culture and people play in his business success:

They are our culture. We're the same culture. We participate in the language. We feel more comfortable going to those people than picking someone else that is a totally different culture, different language. I think that stuff, that's very helpful for our business.

Concerning the role of her ethnicity in her business venture, RP17 stated, “I was doing something that was specialized in the Latina market. The fact that I was bilingual and had already been specializing in this market was a huge asset.”

III. Theme 3: Access to Financial Resources

The participants expressed how significant financial resources and customers are to their stability and overall success of their businesses. Table 5 depicts information about the number of times the participants of this study discussed factors related to financial resources.

Access to financial resources	No. of references	Participants
Family loans	32	RP03, RP06, RP09, RP10, RP12, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17
Retirement funds	4	RP02, RP04, RP05,
Cultural practices	14	RP07, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15,
Credit cards	24	RP03, RP04, RP07, RP09, RP15, RP16, RP17
Personal funds	17	RP04, RP05, RP07, RP11, RP12, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17

Tab. 5. Theme 5: Access to Financial Resources. Source: prepared by the researcher.

The majority of the participants used personal funds such as savings, retirement funds, severance packages, and credit cards to start their businesses. Two of the participants stated they inherited their businesses from their parents and two others reported that, after the initiation of their businesses, they were able to obtain credit from lending institutions. One participant stated a grant made possible the continuation and expansion of the enterprise, while another stated a government grant enabled him to grow his business. For example, RP03 explained she had been a salaried employee for some time, and when her employer closed the business, she received a one-month severance pay that enabled her to obtain the resources to initiate her own business.

RP04 conveyed that had he not been able to save the money he made from his salaried job and other part-time work, he would not have been able to gather the funds needed to initiate his own business.

RP06 stated, "My mother gave me a loan."

RP07 stated, "It's my money. What I did is, I took a line of credit against my own money with my bank."

RP09 explained she and her husband "had recently moved and sold our house, so we had some disposable income." RP09 added,

Well, we didn't do a lot, we did a Kiva fund. I think had I not spoken English, it would have been an issue because you have to sign up and you have to tell your story in a way that people will lend the money to you. And then, that was \$5,000, and we got another \$3,000 loan in 2016. ... If we hadn't had that money ... we would not have been able to open the restaurant. ... Like I said, he [the participant's business partner] had no credit history, so he would not have been able to take out a loan.

RP11 conveyed that she had the idea, but it was winning a competition that awarded her \$100,000 that enabled her to initiate the venture.

RP12 explained that he asked clients to pay him in advance for work, and he was eventually able to gather \$1,250 to launch his business. RP12 stated that being able to gather that initial amount of money enabled him to start his business, and from there he continued to grow.

RP15 explained,

I had some money that I thought it would have been enough, and it ended up not being enough, to a point where probably a year or two after, I was still trying to use personal loans and credit cards to continue operating, so it was more of my drive to, "Hey, I need to get into this, and it's going to be a good way for me to succeed and reach my goals." I think I gambled, kind of, going into that because I didn't have a lot of financial resources ... but after I was halfway there, then I couldn't turn back around, but continue.

RP16 also used personal savings to start up: “I had about \$4,000 in the bank. So, I grabbed \$3,000 [and] invested it to get the rent [for a storefront] going.”

RP17 stated,

I got an American Express card. I had no money in the bank, really. I mean, maybe a thousand dollars. But I had an American Express card, and then clients covered my expenses. I really did not have a lot of overhead.

IV. Theme 4: Working Through Challenges

The participants of this study did not achieve success without experiencing barriers. The participants reported experiencing different challenges along the journey, including legal challenges such as immigrant status, bureaucratic constraints in obtaining licenses, lack of access to credit, racial or ethnic bias toward Hispanics, limited information for startups, prejudice, sex bias, and lack of language proficiency. While the challenges experienced by the participants were diverse, one of the most critical aspects of this theme is that participants employed various strategies to overcome or mitigate the barriers. Table 6 contains information about the number of times the participants of this study referenced the different strategies they used to work through the challenges of owning an ethnic business.

Working through challenges	No. of references	Participants
Family & community support	28	RP04, RP07, RP08, RP09, RP10, RP11, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP16
Innovative ideas	20	RP09, RP12, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17
Cultural services	22	RP02, RP07, RP08, RP10, RP12, RP13, RP14, RP15, RP16, RP17
Education	15	RP01, RP02, RP03, RP09, RP10, RP13, RP14, RP16, RP17

Tab. 6. Theme 4: Working Through Challenges. Source: prepared by the researcher.

Many of the participants expressed that early identification of barriers and challenges enabled them to adopt strategies that helped in the elimination of such barriers. Some participants spoke of training, networking, education, family support, and so forth, to overcome barriers and stay relevant in their respective fields. This theme also covers the experiences of the participants about business failure. In discussing the types of barriers participants faced over the years and how those challenges were overcome, RP01, for example,

stated, "Look, some people ... are pretty racial and do not like to give work to the person who speaks Spanish"; RP01 stated he works around those barriers by educating himself and reading about new techniques in his business field.

RP04 stated that independent pharmacists are viewed as drug dealers, and their establishments are considered "drug heaven." RP04 added, "That's not actually true. There are people that, like myself, run a business the right way and actually care about patients and try to, you know, care about their well-being."

RP07 stated,

I have seen preferential treatment given to others, and it goes back to being a cultural [business] and the atmosphere of where the business is right now. ... You normally would overcome those barriers by forming association[s] with people that want you.

RP10 stated that many of the challenges she has faced in operating her own business were overcome through "networking and training" and added, "So, I've definitely foster[ed] relationships with the universities around me, so that they know me. They know who I am, and they know the quality of my work."

RP13 explained that overcoming barriers is a matter of figuring "out what went wrong, and you start over. ... Oh, yes, finding the right staff ... that's the biggest roadblock that I found."

RP14 provided the following explanation,

I think, number one, the processes of ... of getting over, so that's another cultural barrier that we have, where Latinos are taught not to borrow money, not to be in debt. It's something, at least in my family and in many other ones that I know, too. I think it's a cultural thing that we are taught to do things on our own. We don't understand that in ... typical business, people don't risk their own money. Typically, they just borrow money and, "Here, I have this great idea, but let me borrow some money and let me see if it works." There's a lot of structures to support that. But we [Hispanics] have a hard time overcoming that because we have this stigma of getting a loan. So, I think that was probably the first thing, with getting over my pride and, like, no, this doesn't mean I'm doing bad, it just means that I need to have a cushion.

In summary, RP14 stated she overcame cultural and personal barriers with the help of a Small Business Development Center in her state.

Success. The themes developed from the data served as the medium to present those ethnic and cultural factors the study participants identified that

influence their success. Success indicators are as various as the definitions of *success*. Dyke and Murphy (2006) explained that success is traditionally measured based on organizational level and salary, and argued it is essential to understand the subjectivity of success, which refers to “individual feelings about their accomplishments” (p. 359). While all participants in the study shared the ethnic and cultural factors they believe influenced their success as business owners, there were some participants who offered their own definitions of *success*.

In defining *success*, some of the participants measured their success from very intimate and personal perspectives. For example, RP02 explained that success is “being able to take pride in what you’ve built.” RP02 added success is “recognition from, you know, people we’re serving.” RP02 also shared what he believes is not a definition of success: “Success is not, you know, how much money you can stuff in a suitcase.”

RP10 defined *success* as her ability to “pay the bills.” She offered a similar opinion as that of RP02 about what she considers is not a definition of success: “I think once you break out of the rat race, success is no longer making the most money you can in the shortest amount of time you can.”

RP11 provided her definition of *success*: “I think that success is a different definition for many people. For me, success was to have the tool in as many people’s hands as possible to change as many lives as possible. For me, that was a success.”

RP12 stated,

Well, I think my success is that my daughters were able to study. Success is that I have been able to do what I wanted; my success is that people thank me. My success is that people bless me when they see me handing out the newspaper or covering a story. When I can help someone to do something, like getting a young man a scholarship ... that’s success.

Like RP02 and RP11, RP13 stated that success is not “money.” RP13 shared her definition of success:

The fact that I ... not only my success when it comes to being a successful business but in my success on how much I can help them and how much I can accomplish for them. You know what I mean? I think that’s huge.

RP14 offered this definition of success:

I think success is ... impacting or more so having influence, I think, in our community. And impacting change in our community; I think that to me is more of the kind of way that I measure success for my business.

RP15 explained,

I think I describe my success as being able to personally dream of having my own business and being able to run my own business because when I went to school for business administration, my dream was to have a business. Basically, opening my business and being able to stay open, that I didn't go bankrupt or should close it, I think that was my success.

RP17 shared her definition:

I think success is being inspired, on a daily basis, by what you're doing. And there can be monetary value to that, or not. That could be raising a child. That could be working for the Peace Corps. That could be gardening. Anything. It's just like, if you are inspired by the life you're living, you are successful.

5. Discussion

The researcher sought to answer the research question: What are the cultural and ethnic factors that first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs identify that have led to their business success? To answer the research question, the researcher conducted 17 interviews utilizing semi-structured interview questions. The analysis of the data collected for this study produced four themes: access to financial resources, cultural awareness, knowledge of the industry, and working through challenges. These four themes served as a window to a deeper understanding of Hispanic entrepreneurs in the United States and how their ethnic and cultural background influences their success. This study revealed that Hispanic entrepreneurs' access to financial resources to start up is limited, and, as in the case of other ethnic groups, they resort to personal funds to finance their businesses (Carter et al., 2015; Vallejo & Canizales, 2016). The findings of this study also showed that ethnicity and culture have a significant impact on the success of Hispanic entrepreneurs because they rely on the support of their community for the survival of the business. The experiences of the participants told a story that reflects the relevancy of Hispanic culture in the overall success of their businesses.

The stories of the participants translate into resilience, determination, optimism, and perseverance. Having been born outside of the host nation, the participants of this study sought the American dream through the entrepreneurial lens. Living and working in the American society before entering self-employment afforded the participants training opportunities that enabled them to develop skill sets unique to the industries in which they later became self-employed. Observing the results of this study through

the lens of the theme knowledge of the industry is revealing in that a solid foundation of knowing a line of business and keeping up with the trends of that industry appears to be essential factors in the professional development of entrepreneurs and the growth of their enterprises. Entrepreneurship researchers have found that knowledge of the industry is a critical factor as it directly relates to entrepreneurial success (K. Y. Wang, Kitvorametha, & Wang, 2014). What this means is that Hispanic entrepreneurs share similar human capital (knowledge) with other ethnic entrepreneurs (Moon et al., 2013) that is not directly related to culture and ethnicity.

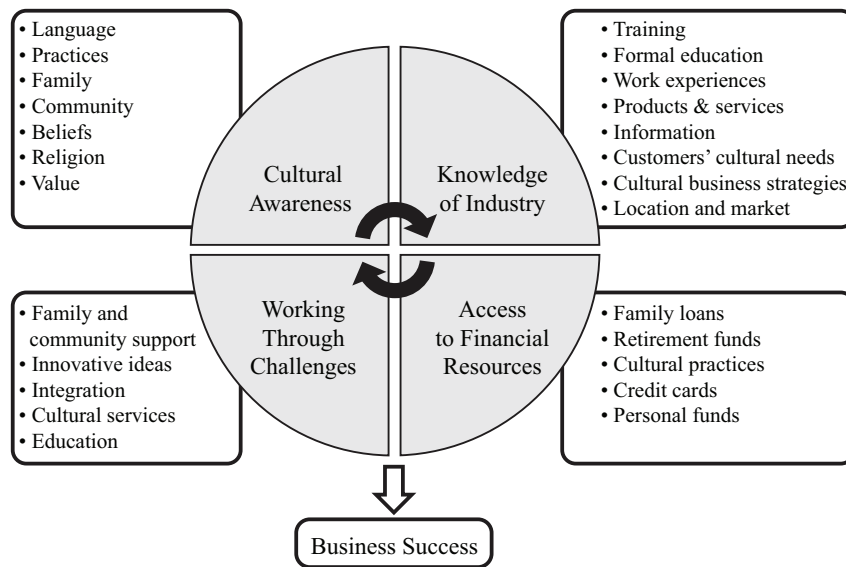


Fig. 1. Themes that emerged from the study. Source: prepared by the researcher.

The participants shared that one of the factors that contributed to the success of their businesses is knowledge of their culture and American culture. This finding identified that a combination of their cultural roots coupled with the assimilation of the host nation's culture contributed to their success. Based on the stories told by the participants, being able to conduct business in the English and Spanish languages gave them a significant business advantage in their industries because they can provide services to people outside of the ethnic enclave. Also, for the participants, family and community support were instrumental in the development and sustainability of their enterprises. The participants shared that they relied on the support of their families to initiate the business ventures and for the continuity of

the enterprise. Family support is not atypical to ethnic entrepreneurs due to the collective orientation that characterizes ethnic entrepreneurs (Scott, Curci, & Mackoy 2012; Vallejo & Canizales, 2016). This finding reveals that there is a substantial similarity between some cultural factors of Hispanic entrepreneurs and cultural factors of other ethnic groups.

This study also revealed that there are no apparent differences between other minority groups and Hispanic entrepreneurs' access to financial resources. If lending institution policies are biased and discriminatory against African Americans in the United States, Hispanic entrepreneurs face the same challenges. Again, this research exposed significant commonalities between Hispanic entrepreneurs and other ethnic entrepreneurs who face financial barriers and cultural isolation in the host nation.

The results of this study revealed that despite experiencing barriers during the startup process and throughout the longevity of the business, the participants resolved to mitigate and overcome obstacles through the support of their community and reliance on education, training, experience, and hard work. The way in which the participants of this study mitigated barriers showed a significant level of resilience by this group of ethnic entrepreneurs. Such resilience is manifested in their way of overcoming marginality created by limited knowledge of the host nation's language, bureaucratic processes, and limited access to information. Despite the disadvantages imposed on them by a system of inequalities, where the dominant class deliberately socially excludes them because of their culture, ethnicity, sex, age, or immigrant status, they found strength and encouragement within their cultural values and beliefs in beating the odds.

In sum, the results of this study revealed that the entry motivation for Hispanic entrepreneurs is consistent with the entry motivation of other entrepreneurs. Additionally, apart from cultural differences, the struggles and experiences of Hispanic business owners in the United States are similar to the struggles and marginalization experienced by other minority business owners. Furthermore, other than cultural factors, the factors that lead to the success of first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs in the United States are similar to factors identified in the literature. Such factors include knowledge of market (Garri & Konstantopoulos, 2013), education (Peters & Brijlal, 2011), the location of enterprise (Dahl & Sorenson, 2012), and knowledge of the host nation's language (Rueda-Armengot & Peris-Ortiz, 2012).

5.1. Design Limitations

This study has limitations from the standpoint of its methodology and design. For instance, the exploratory qualitative methodology was a limitation because the researcher assumed the approach was ideal for extracting the opinions and reflections of the participants (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). Also, the recruiting venue used in this study is a limitation

as the participants for this study were recruited from Facebook by soliciting first-generation Hispanic business owners who were Facebook users. The sampling method, sampling size, and selection criteria are limitations to the study because a larger sample size, refinement of the inclusion criteria, and use of different venues to recruit the participants may have produced richer data and, consequently, different results. Transferability is a concern for qualitative researchers because qualitative research is presumed weak regarding the generalizability of findings that can be extended to a broader population with the same certainty as that of quantitative analysis (Birchall, 2014). This study was specifically designed to explore the ethnic and cultural factors of first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs that influence their success. Taking into consideration the specificity of the population and topic, transferability beyond the boundaries set for this study could be limited.

5.2. Delimitations

Delimitations in this study placed boundaries on the scope of the research inquiry. In this study, the researcher did not investigate whether there was a relationship between the personal sacrifices of the participants and their success as entrepreneurs. Additionally, this study did not investigate financial returns as a success factor. Also, this study did not include second-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs, who could have shed light on whether there is a significant difference in the impact that cultural and ethnic factors have on second-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs' success.

5.3. Implications

This study has both theoretical and practical implications. From a theoretical standpoint, the social marginality theory guided this study and the findings through the interpretation of the themes that emerged from the participants' responses support its principal tenets: contingent and systemic marginality. The participants provided ample information concerning the inequalities, restrictions, and disadvantages they faced in the host country during the initiation of their enterprises and as they continued to grow. From a practical standpoint, this study has significant implications for the American society. For instance, a greater understanding of the circumstances and social environment in which Hispanics operate may increase their success in the American business community, which in turn could generate more jobs and help close the wealth gap between Hispanics and Whites. Given the low success rate of minority entrepreneurs, the results of this study could help in understanding the needs of Hispanic entrepreneurs and how factors associated with their culture and ethnicity contribute to the reasons for which they engage in entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore, understanding the systemic marginalization that Hispanic entrepreneurs face in the United States can serve as a vehicle to generate

awareness and the creation of policies that could aid in the elimination of the barriers that impede the positive performance and growth of ethnic businesses in the United States.

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research

This study contributes to the academic body of knowledge in the field of ethnic entrepreneurship and provides insight into the resources used by Hispanic entrepreneurs that contribute to their success. From a theoretical point of view, this study highlights the relevance of social-spatial marginality theory in ethnic studies. However, many research topics concerning Hispanic entrepreneurship, methodology, and design employed to study entrepreneurship remain unexplored. Consequently, future studies should investigate whether Hispanic-owned businesses located in ethnic enclaves face greater entrepreneurial barriers in comparison to ethnic businesses located in nonminority neighborhoods. Additionally, future research should explore whether there are any significant distinctions concerning cultural and ethnic factors that contribute to the success of Hispanic subgroups (e.g., Venezuelans, Dominicans, and Colombians).

6. Conclusion

The primary focus of this study was to determine the ethnic and cultural factors that contribute to the success of first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs. The results of the study showed that the data collected produced enough information to determine that ethnic and cultural factors of first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs play a significant role in their success as entrepreneurs. Factors that emerged from the themes discussed in the study – knowledge, and education, access to financial resources, language proficiency, training, and previous work experience – support previous academic work in the field of entrepreneurial success.

Even though the success factors identified in this study reflect findings in other studies in which the topic of entrepreneurship was investigated, it is important to note there is potential for variation as not all first-generation Hispanic entrepreneurs have the same level of education, training, and work experience. However, the study is significant to the Hispanic community in the United States because it provides specific information on the factors related to the Hispanic culture and ethnicity that impact the success of Hispanic business owners. Currently, in the United States, the Hispanic community is the most significant minority group and represents 17.7% of the total population (Price & Khubchandani, 2016). Consequently, Hispanic entrepreneurship activity in the United States will increase. Taking this information into account, the results of this study could assist Hispanics/Latinos who are entrepreneurs or those seeking to engage in entrepreneurial activity in recognizing factors about their culture and ethnicity and the

environment in which they live that could give them an edge in their fields of operation. The results of this study could also serve to guide future policies concerning the needs of ethnic entrepreneurs, and to show how government institutions could facilitate resources that would enable ethnic entrepreneurs to start up and sustain their businesses in the United States.

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