

The Role of Race and Ethnicity in Career Development

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Insights and Personal Reflections

I genuinely enjoy discussing the impact of race and ethnicity on career development because it is honestly an area of my life that I never truly considered until I moved away from my hometown of Las Vegas. My family is of Mexican background, the church I grew up in was about 90-95% Latino, the school I went to was part of that same church, and the Latino population in Vegas is significantly more than here in Lynchburg. Essentially, I did not realize how much my culture influenced my worldview of career and professionalism until I moved out here to Lynchburg.

I mentioned in my first reflection that it is a common understanding for Latino men are expected to be protectors and providers, which influences the trades or professions we choose. Most of the work that they do tends to be hard, manual labor. and I think that is due to the level of comfort and knowledge they have with doing that type of work. However, there is also a new generation of Latinos whose parents emphasized the importance of obtaining a professional degree so that they do not have to “work as hard breaking their backs” as they did when they immigrated to the states. This is a sociocultural factor that significantly influences one’s career choice, and it is a very real pressure felt by many Latino Millennials, Gen X-ers, and Gen Z-ers.

The Economic Significance for Minority Cultures

I mentioned earlier that another common factor impacting Latino communities is the need to choose a trade, career, or profession that generates enough income to support a growing family. Hence, this is one of the reasons why becoming a doctor, lawyer, or politician was emphasized when I was growing up. I remember thinking about the journey of becoming a doctor, and it was not something I felt called to do or even wanted to do. However, because the

earning power and social influence that is automatically given to doctors, that seemed to be enough of an appeal for me to pursue that career as an option. Once I felt that it was not a ‘good fit’ for me, I decided to pursue the ‘next big thing’ which was a law degree. The idea of becoming a lawyer was presented as a prestigious accomplishment that carried with it more even more influence, but I found it difficult to manage working those countless late hours and sacrificing time with my family. I saw the profession as basically defeating the purpose of pursuing any career which was to provide for my future family.

After a long time of prayer and self-reflection, I decided to go with understanding who I was and what skills and interests God instilled in my and chose a career at lines up with those abilities. Honestly, if it was not for the strong desire I had to teach and minister to college students through education, I would not be currently pursuing a doctoral degree. As much as I have enjoyed growing as a counselor and sitting with my clients during their darkest moments, having the option to still teach in the future and seeking God’s strength and encouragement has kept me moving forward in this program. Additionally, obtaining a doctorate degree adds not only an economic benefit, but also the privilege for Latino parents to share with their friends that their child is now a “Dr.” As I have matured, I realized why this means so much to Latino parents. For them, it means that the sacrifices they made for us growing up is justified by us reaching that milestone in our lives. As a father myself, I now understand why they felt the way that they did.