

Whether you were a first generation Latinx student or not, what was your experience like? What do you think of your experience?

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# Latinx

## First-generation Students

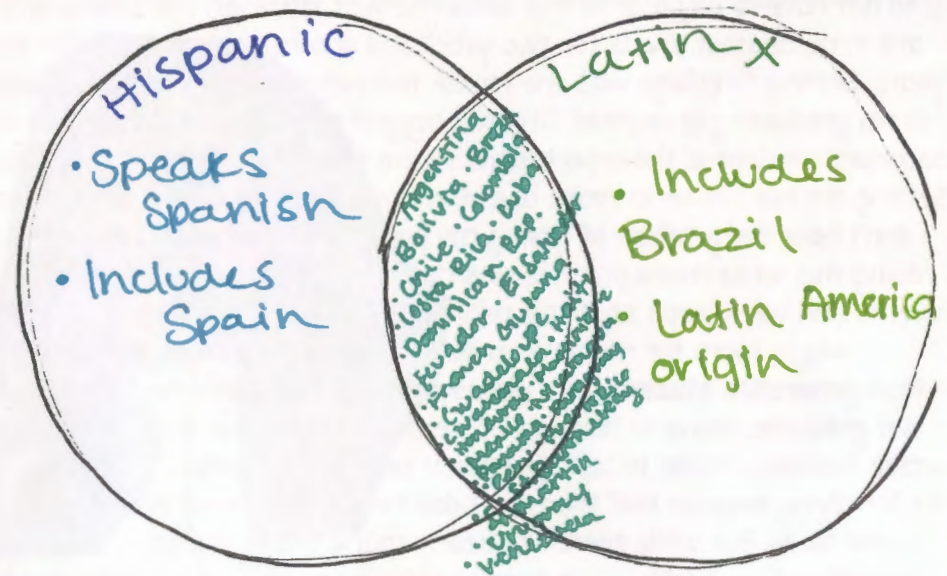
Pr:  
Brenda  
Lazaro



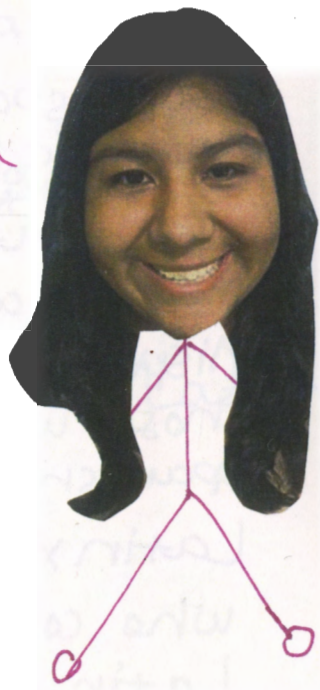
Latinx is a gender neutral term used to refer to Latino or Lating.

Latinx can replace Latino

Hispanic is a State term. Sometimes Hispanic and Latinx are used interchangeably; however, Hispanic refers to only those who come from Spanish speaking countries. Latinx refers to anyone who comes from a Latin American country.



Elizabeth Aguilar, 18  
Mexican  
Bachelor's in English  
and International +  
Global Studies at  
University of  
Central Florida



It's been a hectic and anxious journey already. Because **I had no one** in my home to turn to for help, I had to handle applications, housing, enrollment and financial aid alone. I did not want my parents to **concern** themselves **with funding my education**, considering we struggle on a daily basis, so I bore the responsibility on my own. Through grants and scholarships, I've been fortunate to not have to pay a dime this academic year. However, one scholarship is one-time, another one is for two years and another only extends for three years. Getting to college was one hurdle, but not allowing finances to keep me from graduating is another. Still, the biggest struggle I face as a first-time bachelor's student is the expectations. I have to excel at everything because I'm setting the bar. I have to make use of every resource available simply because **I don't have the privilege of having my parents tell me what I need**. And I'm doing this while managing five-plus classes, a job, extracurricular activities, events and workshops, studying, relaxing and other commitments. There's no wiggle room for messing up because **as a low-income, minority, first-generation student, I am already identified as someone who will likely not graduate**. I have to have a plan because I don't have time, or money, to waste. Basically, I have to be independent and fully responsible for myself. And it's terrifying because half the time, I don't even know what I'm doing, or what I need to do. But while there are clearly many, many obstacles, I know the rewards will be worth it. We need to remember why we are here, and keep pushing through. Networking, studying, taking breaks and finding a way to motivate ourselves will help us walk down that stage and earn our degrees.

Tanya Trazo, 31, Mexican /  
Salvadoran, Ph.D. in Clinical  
Psychology

I'm the first in my family to work toward a Ph.D. I **don't have much guidance** but I will say that I have **a lot of support**. Although my parents have no clue what I'm really talking about when I explain my daily and long-term tasks or complain about the bureaucracy of academia, **they listen y me apoyan**. Other struggles I've faced are related to **race and ethnicity**. There are very **few doctoral students of color in my field**. Sometimes I hear problematic things in the classroom, by both professors and students. I'm not immune from saying something ignorant, either. But having more diversity in the classroom - and people willing to call us out when we misstep - would help us all be more informed. Another struggle is that I often feel like I'm seen as the **"Latina caucus,"** speaking for all Latinos when I express an opinion. Moreover, I often feel like I need to say things in a really **"level" manner** when I speak, to **reject the "fiery Latina" stereotype**. But it's hard to stay "level" when you hear these **microaggressions or other myopic statements** in the classroom and during professional seminars. Because of this, it's important that we **find students like us**. My friends of first-generation and/or doctoral students of color are a collaborative community. We share reading materials, scholarship opportunities and more with one another. Finding them, creating mentorship relationships with professionals who are of color or LGBTQ-identifying and staying close with my family is **the support** I need to get through everything else.



Brenda Lazaro, 20, Mexican  
Bachelor's in CCM,  
Willamette University

Like most first-generation students, I only have my mamí's support. "Yo se que tu puedes, nada mas echale ganas" is what my mamí tells me. My mamí has always pushed me to succeed academically and she wanted us, her kids, to have a **better future**. She wants me to stay focused in school. When I first started thinking about college, I was in middle school. It was when I got nominated for Willamette Academy. That is where I learned what my mamí couldn't teach me, about college. As time got closer I was scared about my decision. I did not want to be far away from my family and I also worried about the **cost**. Without scholarships it would be impossible for me to attend a college like Willamette University, especially because my parents wouldn't have been able to afford having 3 kids in college. Since my first **language** is Spanish, I still struggle with both English and Spanish. Sometimes my **accent** or pronunciation stops me from participating in class and sometimes it's hard saying what I think when in my head my thoughts are in **Spanglish**. It's important to have friends that you can relate to, it creates a **safe space**. It's also important to communicate with your professors, especially when you're falling behind. What has definitely helped me is the support from my family, friends, and professors.



Cynthia Nayeli Carvajal, 24, Mexican,  
Ph.D. in Educational Leadership,  
University of Arizona

As a first-generation Ph.D. student, and someone who was **formerly undocumented**, I always feel the pressure to **support my family economically**. This responsibility has never been placed on me verbally, but as the only person in my family with bachelor's, master's and soon-to-be doctorate degrees, I know there will come a time when I will have to support my family financially, and that pressure is constant. But that's not the only pressure. The Latina/o Educational Pipeline shows that **out of 100** elementary school Latin students, **64** will graduate high school. Of them, **11** will graduate with a bachelor's degree, and **3.6** of those students will go on to receive a master's or professional degree. From that 3.6, **.4** will receive a Ph.D. I pursue my Ph.D. in order to change that .4 average. This Ph.D. will prove to me, and to everyone, that **our communities are present in spaces that weren't designed to support us**. It will also provide me with the tools and opportunities to **support** other Latinas as they pursue higher education. We just need to be willing to react

Stephanne Watkins-Gruz, 21  
Colombian, Master of Public  
Administration at University  
of North Carolina at  
Chapel Hill



Growing up, I don't remember seeing many **women of color in roles** I wanted to be in, so I need to be that face for other kids. I never thought I could actually get here, a master's student, and now I have. Four years ago, when **my family lost our home** for the second time, I didn't think I would be able to finish my bachelor's degree, but I did. It's a **constant cycle of doubt, perseverance and goal-setting**. I doubt because of **money** - because of things life throws at me - I persevere because I have no other choice, and I set new goals when I make it to through the old ones. It's also important for us to not stay in the box that society, including academia, places us in. I'm **colombiana**, but I'm **also black and Native American**. There are a slew of **stereotypes** that come with this, and will continue in higher education, but **we need to resist them**. We are not in our programs to **fill diversity** quotas; we are here because **we belong here**; we made it here, and we will make it in our next endeavors too

Beandys De los Santos, 21,  
Dominican, Bachelor's in  
Communications from the  
State University of New York

In 2006, my mother, my sister and I got our papers. However, my father didn't get his papers until now in 2015. My parents **sacrificed** living apart just to offer my sister and me **a better education, a better future**. Being a first-generation bachelor's student, I feel like it is my responsibility to **make those sacrifices worth it** and become successful. So far, everything **feels like an experiment**. I've been doing this on my own, so, naturally, I've made a lot of mistakes on the way. But, even more importantly, I've learned a lot, and I want to make sure I **pass all that knowledge down** to my sister, who is currently a junior in high school. Although I might be the first in my family to attend college, I know I'm not alone in this. That's why **we need to uplift, empower and motivate other first-generation Latinas to strive for success**. There is **nothing more powerful than an educated woman**. It is important that as women, especially Latina women, we strive to educate ourselves as much as possible and **break all the degrading stereotypes** out there by finishing our careers and becoming successful. All the opportunities are out there; we just have to find them. The primary tool is education. It's our most powerful weapon.



Ideology: a system of beliefs, myths, and values

Ideogram: a symbol that can represent an ideology.

Latinx have to break ideologies / ideographs.



Ideograph: a word that is associated with an ideology.



All immigrants are drug dealers, criminals, rapists, terrorists...

Latinx are portrayed as illegal invading aliens.



Racism: discrimination or hatred against other races. A belief that other races are inferior.

Latinx students suffer from racism because of the lack of support from schools.

"You won't go to college"

"Those courses will be too hard for you"



"You will probably drop out"

"That's not how you say it"

"Where are you from?"

"You sound funny"

"I can't tell"  
"I can't tell your accent"

Most first-generation Latinx students are bilingual. Some of these students' first language is Spanish. Students are constantly judged because of their accent or because they speak Spanglish. It is difficult to express one's thoughts and feelings when we are

# Microaggression:

a comment or action used to discriminate minorities.

# Metaphor:

Mosquito Bites = support from Microaggression

The problem is that some people get bitten by mosquitoes a lot more than other people. A LOT more. Might seem like an overreaction to those who only get bitten once in a while. Some mosquitoes carry threatening diseases that can mess up your life for years. Others can kill you. Remember, some get bitten

ALL THE TIME



@<https://youtu.be/NDd3b2A7450>