

Feminist Narrative  
Research: Shanghai  
Working Moms,  
Black Working  
Moms, Women's  
Soul Collage Group  
and Latina First  
Generation College  
Students.

Karen Zong, Shanghai, China  
Suji Venkataraman, La Honda, CA  
Constance Pierce, Raeford, NC  
Kathy Medina, Baldwin Park, CA  
Fielding Graduate University Students  
Panel Convenor: Annabelle Nelson, PhD, Nederland, CO  
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# ANNABELLE NELSON



Professor, Fielding Graduate University, researcher in imagery, storytelling, narrative for empowerment & bonding.

“Narrative research studies the whole person in context and examines whole lives. Stories convey information in a present time sense and include a felt sense, giving new perspectives and clarity to understanding experiences. The patterns of these experiences become apparent” (Nelson et al, 2008, p. 128).

# Narrative Research Taps Stories

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People are storytellers by nature. Stories provide coherence and continuity to one's experience and have a central role in our communication with others....One of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives and their experienced reality (Lieblich et al, 1998, p.7)



# Narrative Research Positionality

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Springing from a feminist perspective, narrative research is an antidote to chauvinism and exclusivity in research. As Patricia Hill Collins states narrative research is infused with the ethics of caring and the responsibility of the researcher to understand the history of participants and see the reciprocity in creating knowledge.





Lived experiences are the criteria. The researcher co-constructs knowledge by endowing the participant with agency.





Now for the show!





# Shanghai Working Moms Navigating Covid Lockdown

Karen Zong



The Bund of Shanghai on April 28th 2022.



**The Bund of Shanghai on September 28th 2021.**



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# References

Aldossari, M., & Chaudhry, A. (2021). Women and burnout in the context of a pandemic. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(2), 826–834.

Reichelt, M., Makovi, K., & Sargsyan, A. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on gender inequality in the labor market and gender-role attitudes. *European Societies*. 1–16.

Woodbridge, L., Um, B., & Duys, D. (2021). Women's experiences navigating paid work and caregiving during the Covid-19 pandemic. *The Career Development Quarterly*.

# 1. Participants

As of end 2021, Shanghai's population was 24.9 million (7th China Population Census, China National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

China adopted zero-Covid measures since 2020.

Due to spiking outbreak of Covid cases in Shanghai in March 2022, Pudong (the east region of Shanghai) was placed under region-wide static management on Mar 28<sup>th</sup>, while Puxi (the west region of Shanghai) also placed static management on April 1<sup>st</sup> (Tencent News July 2022).

Static management means people are not allowed to go outside their residential compound without a special permit.

For 61 days, Shanghai city went through a mandatory lockdown, where food and supplies were acquired through group shopping and waiting.

Three working mothers, age between 38 and 46, who juggled work and family responsibilities during the mandatory lockdown, volunteered to participate in the study.

## 2. Data Sources

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Conducted interviews through WeChat video with the 3 moms early in the morning, each lasted 60 to 75 minutes.

Final comments after reviewing the summary: *“It feels so good to get it all out”. “I can now put it all behind me”. “Well, I think I did pretty well looking back.....”*

Five interview questions:

- *When was a really stressful moment for you during the lockdown? What happened? What made it stressful and how did you react to it?*
- *Tell me about a conscious choice you made during the lockdown that helped your coping with the stress. What led you to that choice and how did it go ?*
- *What was one moment that you felt really supported during the lockdown and how did it impact you?*
- *Thinking about the overall experience, what stands out for you about how you see yourself? Did you find out something new about yourself or learned something new?*
- *If something like this might happen again in the future, how might you handle it the same or differently?*

# 3. Data Analysis

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There was the cross-cultural challenge.

1. Prepared interview summary in Chinese and did the first round of color coding manually.
2. Completed the translation with the help of Deepl.com.
3. Transferred the color coding to the English summary, and further worked on coding using brackets, paraphrases, etc manually.
4. To minimize loss in translation, I placed Chinese and English summary side by side
5. With 3 participants and 5 questions, I completed the coding process manually which generated clear themes.

# 4. Themes

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1. “At the end of the day, I felt so tired, lonely and helpless”

*“Everyday I make 3 meals, ensure two girls do their distant learning and finish their homework, buy food and supplies through group shopping, and worked till late ..... some days I couldn't bring myself up to work with my daughter on her homework revision... **I chose to be a single mother four years ago, but I have never felt so tired, lonely and helpless...** “*

2. Negative news, false news, complaints flooded social media, I spent so much time reading them and battling sense of panic, until I learned to filter out such messages/individuals.

*“**One of my friends kept sending me internal news and gossips she's received. We both were very stressed, worried, and we influenced each other...** So in May I only look at group shopping info...and that helped a lot”*

## 4. Themes (Continued)

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3. “One big disappointment was that my husband couldn’t help much”  
*“My husband was traveling in southern China and couldn’t come back. **We didn’t see him until two and half months later..... He didn’t even understand that we were going through, I made the choice to not have any communication with him about the epidemic...I was too busy...**”*  
*“My husband spent most of the time on his phone or his computer.....he is too worried about worsening economy and impact on his business.”*
4. “I got to know my neighbors better...helping others helped me feel calm. ”  
*“I got help from neighbors, and I volunteered to cook for the security guards, **I got to know my neighbors better and had more in-depth communication. It helped with my stress, helping others helped me to feel calm.** ”*  
*“One day, I was successful in delivering some much-needed medication to my neighbors, **it felt really good.....**”*

## 5. Ahas: 3 common themes for the East and West

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### 1. Gender inequality

*Women took on more caregiving responsibilities than men with closures of schools and childcare services (Darmody et. al. 2020; )*

*Fathers were less likely to reduce work hours during the pandemic than mothers" (Reichelt et al., 2020).*

*Pandemic is causing more severe psychological distress and adverse psychological outcomes for mothers (Hamel & Salganicoff, 2020).*

### 2. The use of social media causes increased anxiety levels and social comparison during lockdown

*"I can't differentiate false news anymore...." "I feel bad about spending too much time on my phone..."*

### 3. Home/family related stress is paramount for working moms

*A working female with children experiences increasingly blurred distinction between home and work Working mothers experience a wide range of emotional stress: anxiety, anger, guilt, loneliness, fear, etc. . ( Aldossary & Chaudhry, 2020).*

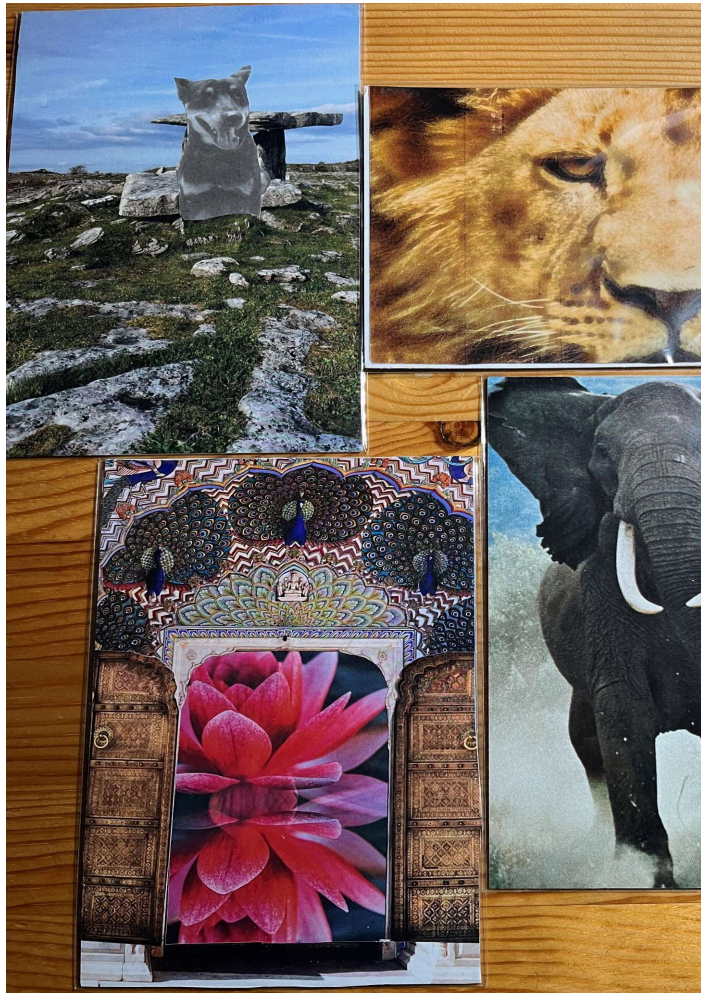


# A small group of SoulCollage practitioners' experiences in a community of practice

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SUJI VENKATARAMAN





## Setting

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researcher is a trainer and practitioner of a specific Soul work practice called the SoulCollage. After completing the training for trainers, she spearheaded a COP group, and invited three other trainers into the COP. The four members started meeting once a month, at the end of 2020, and still meets, to discuss topics using their SoulCollage card deck.

Note: The pictures in these slides are the SoulCollage cards made by the researcher, and they are not copy right free. Please do not publish the picture or the slides.

## Literature

Frost, S. B. (2010). *SoulCollage Evolving: An Intuitive Collage Process for Self-Discovery and Community* (1st edition). Hanford Mead Publishers, Inc.

Jorgenson, J., & Steier, F. (2013). Frames, Framing, and Designed Conversational Processes: Lessons From the World Café. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 49(3), 388–405.

Todd, S. (2014). Between Body and Spirit: The Liminality of Pedagogical Relationships. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 48(2), 231–245.



## Participants

The project was completed through a narrative inquiry interview with three members, out of four-member Community of practitioners. The fourth member is the researcher. These members are trained to be trainers of the SoulCollage practice. It was 90 minutes through zoom format.

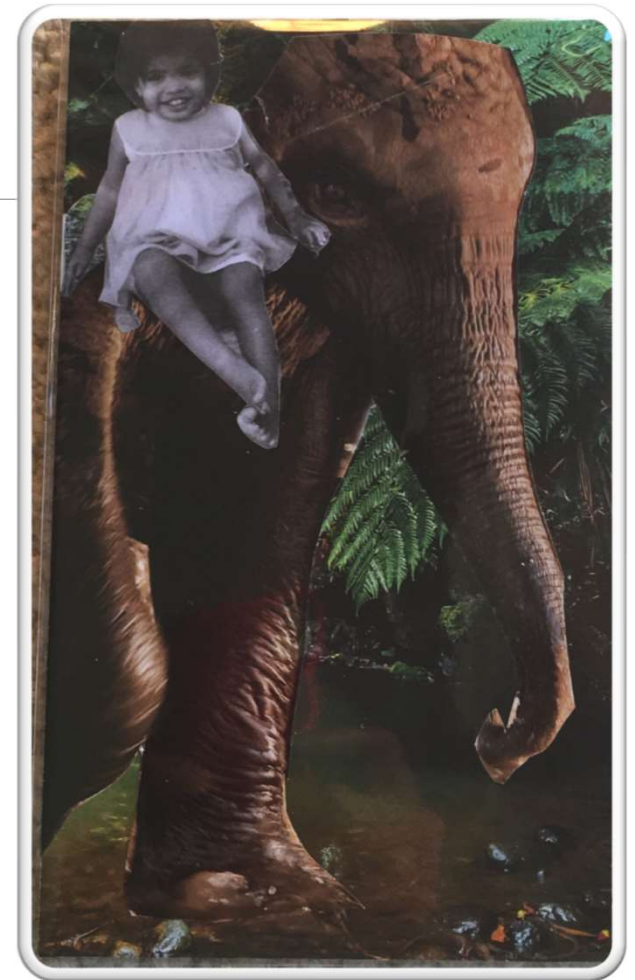


## Data Source

RQ: How do members of a community of practice described how soul work affected them at an individual level and their group life (COP)?

The interview questions were placed under the titles' warm up questions & open-ended questions. Here are a few open-ended questions:

1. Tell me a specific time how and when you recognized changes in who you were in other group settings because of your experiences as part of this COP?
  - If so, in what ways?
  - If not, why?
2. In what ways sharing and reading your SoulCollage cards has benefited or not this COP?



# Data Analysis

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Dedoose's multi-level coding with the parent codes showcased richer nuances or connections within the codes. Thereby the themes derived were easy, rich, yet unexpected too. For example, metaphors like "nest," "thread," "midwife," and "gem" became central to themes.



# Themes

The coding analysis resulted in arriving at sixteen pertinent, relevant, crisp themes.

Themes	Quotes/Excerpts
<b>SoulCollage cards invoke emotions</b>	<b>A:</b> "I mean I feel teary just talking about it there's something about that card that is very deeply moving and I knew it was a deep moving card for you and that moved me."
<b>SoulCollage an intuitive process, its effect resonates at the micro and macro level</b>	<b>LW:</b> "but now soul collage cards were bringing out other parts that were the parts of myself that needed to have a voice."
<b>Metaphors like "nest", "thread", "midwife" "gem" for members and for the COP</b>	<b>LW:</b> "each one of us for its almost like we were a different facet in a gem"
<b>Unexpected connections</b>	<b>A:</b> "Really felt like something was saying these four going to need each other."
<b>COP a protective nest, where holding, witnessing, giving and receiving happened</b>	<b>A:</b> "It is a way of caring about each other loving one another holding one another, that is so much more honest"
<b>The COP is the lifeline for its members</b>	<b>LW:</b> "the string may seem very thin but it's very strong wont break and you guys gave me a lifeline"
<b>COP as an organism, organizes itself</b>	<b>C:</b> "I feel like we're one organism but everybody brings in a piece, and we really respect each other's."
<b>In the COP, individual transformation, leads to group's growth</b>	<b>C:</b> "now that gives me courage and strength to be with women who have the courage and strength to be vulnerable and share."

# Themes

Themes	Quotes/Excerpts
<b>In the sacred COP space connections/oneness always happen</b>	<b>A:</b> "even when we're not together there's still something like a celestial saying that resonates and kind of keeps us held."
<b>COP and the unconditional witnessing</b>	<b>A:</b> "We hold each other well it's just different, and so I think it just has made me appreciate aspects of this group in that it's so flowing you know, like it's just natural."
<b>Members felt a sense of belonging from day one</b>	<b>C:</b> "We really trust each other we've we didn't know what we were signing up, for we just knew that we felt Okay, and that it was a safe enough place and we felt some resonance with each other."
<b>Trust, belonging, through witnessing allows members to transform</b>	<b>C:</b> "witnessing each one of us challenge ourselves at our edge like I feel like we all at some point in time, during this practice during our process together."
<b>Acknowledging that just permitting oneself to be as a self-care</b>	<b>LW:</b> "being able to cry is a way of taking care of myself being able to feel my feelings that i'm going through and feeling safe as i'm doing it is taking care of myself."
<b>Its powerful to notice the elements of soulcollage cards as characteristics of COP</b>	<b>A:</b> "then to bring those together and see the synchronicity see how they are really Community I think it's this way is so powerful."
<b>The COP brings out the value of the soulcollage cards and vice versa</b>	<b>LW:</b> "it's a reminder or remember you have this practice that that marries your spirit with your creativeness with your artists self with your Community self."
<b>Anomaly experiences like second- order learning and reflexivity experiences</b>	<b>C:</b> "it created this common imagery that shared something that gave us a knowing about each other on a meta level that we wouldn't have had if we just spoke spoken word and told a story about ourselves"



## Ah ha's- awareness

**My journey during the data analysis process and interview protocol & analysis** - *The surprise about the process was the multi-level coding, which would have been strenuous or arduous work if completed manually*

**The learned cultural programming-from my earlier years in education in India-** . *I learned to be aware of this so I can be flexible and allow participants to take a route that can bring richer conversations and dialog during the narrative interview.*

**This research experience helped me define my epistemological standpoint as a in my dual role as a researcher and a member of the Communities of practice I belong to-** *The sanctity of the group and "to be somewhere in particular" as Haraway described ( Haraway, 1988, p. 590) became paramount*



# “Strong Black Married Mothers”

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## **Understanding the Motivation of Black Married Mothers with Multiple Roles**

Black married mothers are often seen but unheard, and many are labeled unfairly when heard. Previous research has highlighted all the adverse effects of women having multiple roles. I desire to build on this research and explore any appreciation for taking on more than the World says one should.

Two Black Married Mothers

Between 37-45

Hold a full-time job and/or be an active entrepreneur

At least 1 active child over the age of 6

Involved in Community or Spiritual Activities

## 2. Data Sources

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Interviews were conducted utilizing Zoom video chat with 2 African American Married Mothers

1:1 Interviews

45- 50 minutes

Body Language, Affect and Tone also observed

# 3. Data Analysis

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RQ – What is the motivation of Black married mothers with multiple roles?

Narrative Inquiry

- Giving a voice to the unheard or often silenced population

Zoom Interview

- Notes
- Transcription from Recorded Zoom Sessions

Transcript was coded



# 4. Themes

Themes Emerged  
Around Roles and  
Feelings.

Roles

Feelings

# Mother

- “I have three boys.”
- “I love my family.”
- “My kids and my husband get on my nerves, but I am fulfilled every day; I really absolutely love being a stay-at-home mom, like I love being so active and being able to participate in their lives, not like when I was working at the plant.”
- “I’m the chauffeur, and you know, like prom, and I’m really fulfilled being a wife and mom.

# Wife

- “I am married”
- “I never wanted to be married”
- “I love my husband and what we have built, so I don’t have regrets”



# Entrepreneur

- “I have my own business that I enjoy.”
- “I hated my 9 to 5, there was no room for growth or promotion.”
- “I have my own business and I like trying to grow it and brand it and learn what to do so it’s like that aspect of something that I have never done before. It is difficult to navigate. “

# Everything For Everybody

- “It is very tiring, it’s fulfilling, but it can still be overwhelming and tiring.”
- “I’m the middle child, and my mom is like my best friend, so she calls me before she calls anyone else”
- “My mom lives by herself and she’s getting old so it’s like, I’m that person for her and an auntie for my family”
- “I raised my niece when I was young so my sister could go to college”
- “I play a lot of roles, I have a lot of roles”
- “Because when we as women, mothers and sisters, everything gets put ahead of us, we are empty and everything is frustrating, and everything is annoying. You don’t have time for yourself because you’re used to being a mom and friend”
- “Be everything that you want and can be to yourself. I would not change it”

# Feelings

- **Winning In Life**

“Yea, I just had that moment when my son went to prom because I’m like kind of extra when it comes to my kids and I like to make sure that they have everything they want and need”

“My oldest is varsity quarterback and making really good grades? “I think everything turns out the way it has to because it’s supposed to; I don’t believe in coincidence. I believe that God orchestrated everything”


- **Failure**

“My husband and I were not married a year, and we were arguing about something simple that he didn’t clean in the kitchen, and we were going back and forth. I was going to cook on a grill and when he went to light it, the grill exploded in his face, and he had second-degree burns on his face. Nothing else matters”

“We rent, and I received an email about two weeks ago that the homeowners we’re renting from want to move back in. The market now is not good, so I am overwhelmed, and I am stressed. I feel like it is my fault because I turned down the opportunity to buy our last home”

# 5. Ahas

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1. Women, specifically Mothers will work and care for everyone but often neglect themselves or feel bad when they take care of themselves.
  2. Women, specifically Mothers may complain but they would do it all again.
  3. Having a circle of support is necessary.
  4. The keyword is balance.
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The Implications of Success  
and Educational Attainment  
as told by First-Generation Latinas



**Visiting our dad at work in Monterrey Park, CA in 1985**

## Literature

As a first-generation Mexican American woman and professional, I saw the need to explore how a dream for a better life transforms through time, changing the trajectory of future generations. The current views and policies on immigration in our country continue to feed into human suffering and abuse in our communities. Unfortunately, immigration policy has not changed and has only become more restrictive to non-white immigrants since the Naturalization Act of 1986.

Emotional support from family is significant because, as Rodriguez et al. (2021) stated, it provides first-generation students with a sense of belonging and a way to overcome barriers. For parents and family, encouragement and seeing education as liberation is key (Espino, 2016; Covarrubias et al., 2019). “Working-class” background can foster toughness and self-reliance but can also convey an attitude that a child is a traitor by pursuing higher education (Espino, 2016; Covarrubias et al., 2019). Ballysingh (2019) states that the stories of first-generation college students can help others understand how to build the support they need.

# 1. Participants

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This investigation used narrative inquiry to explore the relationship between cultural and family expectations and how first-generation Latina students define success. The two participants, aged 39-47, were Mexican American women, married, mothers, from Southern California living in the San Gabriel Valley. Both had earned an AA and were continuing their education.



## 2. Data Sources

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Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each participant through the ZOOM application. Interviews varied in duration lasting between 34-40 minutes. The beginning of the interview asked for demographic information regarding the participant's backgrounds and parents' SES history. Here are examples of several open-ended questions:

- Tell me about a time you felt challenged or frustrated as a daughter
- When you think about yourself as a daughter, do you think about how you want to be? How to show up as a daughter? Can you describe yourself in that way?
- Tell me about an important event in your life. What makes it significant for you?
- What is a major motivation for you to reach your goals?
- How do you know when your family believes you have done a job as a daughter? As a student?

# 3. Data Analysis

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Transcripts were reviewed multiple times, and as patterns emerged, narratives were coded to develop themes regarding ethnic identity, bicultural development, family roles and responsibilities within the family unit, personal growth and development, and attainment of a higher education degree.

## 4. THEMES

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1. A good Latina daughter spends time with family

***Glenda spoke about what she described as her roles in her immediate family and extended family. She makes it a priority to be available to attend doctor's visits or attend family functions with her parents. "They are older now, so they have a lot of doctor's appointments, and I go with them. Often, that means we get to go eat and spend time talking and reminiscing, making plans. That does make me happy, to see that it makes her happy."***

2. Honor immigrant mothers...and fathers and make them happy

***Monica mentioned her desire to honor her parents' sacrifices to provide a "better life" for her and make it possible for her to access opportunities they did not have. "I want to give back to my parents so they can live comfortably. As an adult, I realized how hard it was for them to give me a better life."***

3. My Goals: Motherhood; Their Goals: Education

***One of Glenda and Monica's most significant challenges was making their own life choices, even when they did not align with their parent's expectations. Glenda describes becoming a mother, "the most crucial event in my life has been the birth of my son and my parents being part of that experience. It was their first grandchild for them."***

# THEMES

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4. Generational Gap: American Girls...just want to have fun (and money)  
*When it comes to generation differences, Glenda learned a hard life lesson soon after high school when she decided to work and drop out of college. "I wanted to experience adulthood differently than how they thought I should. They disowned me for a little while, but my mom always knew what I was doing and where I was. I was just working and having fun."*
5. First-Gen Latina Student: The struggle starts early, and it's real.  
*Monica had a hard time academically as a student but remembered enjoying the social aspect of school. "School was never a strength for me; I struggled. I remember having a tutor in third grade for math."*
6. Being a successful First-Gen Latina feels like...  
*Glenda felt the most successful the day she marched across the stage with her parents watching. "The sacrifices my parents have made are rewarded by my success. I am also a role model to my son so he can accomplish even more than I have. I want him to know and understand that he could do it if I did it."*

## 5. Aha Moment

This study focused on women's experiences because for change to happen for future generations in immigrant families and communities, it starts with the women feeling empowered.

Listening to the women's stories reassured me that it is time for our parent's dream of a "better life" to be rebranded to a new dream where anything is possible "sin meido" (without fear).



Questions?

