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MOTIVATION TO EARN A DOCTORAL BUSINESS DEGREE FROM AN  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY:  
LATIN AMERICAN STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

by

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2025

To: Dean William G. Hardin  
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This dissertation, written by Matthew A. Thompson, and entitled Motivation to Earn a Doctoral Business Degree from an American University: Latin American Student Perspectives, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Florida International University, 2025

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, whose love, sacrifices, and unwavering support have carried me through this journey.

To my wife, Tammie—your encouragement, patience, and unwavering belief in me have been a constant source of strength. Through every challenge, you stood by my side, offering support in ways both big and small. I am endlessly grateful for you.

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To my siblings, who have been a part of my journey in ways both big and small, your support and connection have meant more than words can express.

And finally, to myself. This journey has been one of continuous learning, growth, and determination. Every late night, every challenge, and every moment of doubt has led to this accomplishment. Lifelong learning has been a defining part of who I am, and this dissertation is another milestone in that pursuit.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Florida International University, 2025

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This study explores the motivations of Latin American students pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from American universities. Guided by Houle's Typology of Adult Learners, the research examines goal-oriented, learning-oriented, and activity-oriented motivations to understand how they influence doctoral decision-making. While international Ph D. education has received significant attention in literature, few studies have addressed the specifics of doctoral business degrees and their relationship to cultural and motivational factors driving Latin American students. This research helps fill that gap by examining a diverse sample of professionals through a quantitative lens.

Data was collected via an online survey and analyzed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) in SPSS. Results indicated that

activity-oriented motivations, particularly familial support and institutional prestige, are the most significant predictors of DBA motivation. In contrast, goal- and learning-oriented factors, such as career development and cultural capital, did not show significant influence. Subfactor analysis further emphasized the role of symbolic capital and culturally grounded family guidance in shaping educational aspirations.

These findings provide practical implications for institutions seeking to attract and support Latin American doctoral students. Understanding the cultural values that underpin DBA motivation can help universities develop more inclusive outreach strategies, tailored support services, and relevant program structures. This research contributes to the broader conversation on international student mobility and the evolving role of professional doctorates in a globalized education landscape.



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## INTRODUCTION

### **Problem Statement**

In today's globalized world, the value of higher education is often debated and scrutinized. Among these many discussions, the value of a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree, especially in an international context, is a topic of interest. The role and significance of higher education are currently under intense debate and scrutiny. In a rapidly evolving economic and technological environment, higher education serves as a compass, guiding individuals and nations toward success. Among these discussions, the value of a DBA, particularly in the international context, is a subject of growing interest. While doctoral education has traditionally been associated with research-based PhDs, professional doctorates such as the DBA are increasingly recognized as alternative pathways to advanced business expertise and leadership development (Bareham, Bournier and Ruggeri Stevens, 2000). An emerging question is whether a professional doctorate provides distinct advantages over a PhD. For its advocates, the professional doctorate offers us the opportunity of constructing new pathways to new forms of profession-based inquiry as well as the reorientation of insular universities outwards to the wider community (Stoten, 2016). The emergence of professional doctorates, such as the DBA, could be seen as a positive shift towards a repositioning of some universities and their view of the varying forms of knowledge (Bareham, Bournier and Ruggeri Stevens, 2000). As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the pursuit of advanced business education has taken on new dimensions, raising questions about its relevance, impact, and potential benefits. However, the

motivations driving international students—particularly those from Latin America—to pursue a DBA from an American university remain unexplored.

### **Globalization and the Changing Face of Business Education**

Globalization has propelled nations beyond geographical and cultural boundaries, creating a connected world where businesses operate in overlapping webs. This has caused the nature of business education to transform dramatically. Traditional notions of business knowledge and expertise are evolving to incorporate multiculturalism, transnational collaboration, and interdisciplinary thinking. Education in the United States can be significantly different than a student's home country. Students also indicated that a major difference between the U.S. education system and that of their home countries is the emphasis of critical thinking and openness in classroom discussions in the U.S. (Han *et al.*, 2015). A DBA, which signifies one of the highest levels of academic achievement, must adapt to these changing realities to remain relevant and valuable.

Despite the increasing number of individuals pursuing a DBA, there is a lack of understanding regarding the motivations of the international community, specifically Latin America, to leave their home countries and seek a doctoral degree in the United States. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the motivations of Latin American students to pursue a DBA from American universities.

### **Significance of the Problem**

Doctoral business programs have evolved from their historical emphasis on research and theory development to encompass a broader range of skills essential for success in a globalized economy. While research remains a cornerstone, modern doctoral

curriculums often integrate practical work experience, industry engagement, and cross-disciplinary learning. The DBA can be viewed as a form of work-based learning. From this perspective, the development of the DBA represents the coming of age of work-based learning within the higher education curriculum. Doctoral awards for work-based learning imply acceptance of work-based learning at the highest level of higher education (Courtois, 2018). This evolution reflects a recognition that business challenges are no longer confined to academic institutions and crosses national borders requiring a nuanced understanding of global market dynamics, cultural differences, and emerging technologies.

As the world becomes more interconnected, businesses face multifaceted challenges that demand sophisticated problem-solving skills and a comprehensive grasp of international markets. A DBA equips individuals with the analytical tools and critical thinking abilities needed to navigate these complexities effectively. Student mobility necessitates a reevaluation of how we measure the success and impact of international education, shifting the focus from institutional prestige to individual competencies and adaptability (Courtois, 2018). Moreover, the research component of doctoral programs cultivates an aptitude for generating actionable insights that can drive organizational innovation and strategic decision-making.

One of the inherent advantages of pursuing a DBA within a global context is the exposure to diverse viewpoints, cultures, and business practices. A paper by Kim explores the ideal of cultural capital (2011). The pursuit of global cultural capital and the prestige of a US education were primary motivations for Korean students in choosing to

pursue their graduate studies in the United States (Kim, 2011). Cultural capital can be defined as valued and exclusive cultural resources that enable one to signal, attain, or maintain a certain type of social status or position (Kim, 2011). Interacting with peers from around the world fosters a rich exchange of ideas and a broader outlook on global business challenges. This exposure not only enriches the educational experience but also equips graduates with the cross-cultural communication skills necessary to collaborate on an international stage. With the globalization of education, many Latin American students are looking beyond their continent for advanced degrees. Students are expressing a high interest in engaging with the world beyond their home borders. As such, study abroad programs at universities and colleges offer unique experiences to students by providing life-long personal and professional benefits such as personal growth, cultural awareness, employability, new language skills, creativity, communication skills, social network development, and other benefits (Curtis and Ledgerwood, 2018). Specifically, this research aims to understand the motivation behind Latin American students' decision to pursue a DBA from an American university.

### **Research Gap**

While the value of higher education, particularly doctoral degrees, has been extensively studied, there is a noticeable lack of research focusing on the specific motivations of Latin American students pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree in the United States. Existing literature predominantly addresses the motivations and experiences of international students from regions such as Asia and Europe, leaving a significant gap in understanding the Latin American perspective.

The increasing global mobility of students has led to a surge in research examining international student motivations, particularly among students from Asia and Europe (Kim, 2011; Yang, Volet and Mansfield, 2018). However, there remains a significant gap in understanding the motivations of Latin American students pursuing advanced business education in the U.S. This demographic presents unique perspectives shaped by distinct cultural, economic, and social contexts. Existing literature has predominantly focused on international students from China and India and the cultural capital aspirations of Korean students, leaving Latin American students relatively understudied (Kim, 2011; Yang, Volet and Mansfield, 2018). Furthermore, prior studies have examined international student motivations in broad academic contexts but have not specifically addressed professional doctorate programs like the DBA degree. The limited research on Latin American students' motivations for pursuing a DBA in the U.S. underscores the need for a focused investigation.

Research on international doctoral students' motivations and experiences has predominantly focused on Asian countries, particularly China and India. Studies by Yang et al. (2018) and Kim (2011) highlight the motivations of Chinese and Korean students, respectively. However, there exists a significant gap in research regarding Latin American students. Understanding their motivations and challenges in pursuing advanced business degrees in the U.S. is essential for fostering a comprehensive understanding of international doctoral education dynamics.

Current research often generalizes motivation across various doctoral programs without distinguishing between professional doctorates like the DBA. Studies by Stoten

(2016) and Bareham et al. (2000) discuss the emergence of professional doctorates but lack a specific focus on the motivations driving Latin American students towards a DBA over a PhD. Exploring the appeal of DBA programs, which integrate practical business skills with advanced research, from the perspective of Latin American students is crucial. Their professional and educational aspirations may differ significantly from those of students in other regions, underscoring the need for targeted research in this area.

Motivational factors such as career advancement, cultural capital, and international exposure have been extensively studied in various contexts. For instance, Kim (2011) discusses how Korean students seek global cultural capital through international education. Meanwhile, Curtis and Ledgerwood (2018) explore motivations related to employability and personal growth. Despite these studies, there remains a dearth of research on the specific motivational factors driving Latin American students towards a DBA in the U.S. Understanding these factors—such as career development, cultural and symbolic capital, social integration, and language proficiency—is crucial for developing effective recruitment strategies and support mechanisms.

While research has examined the influence of family and cultural factors on educational decisions among Latina/o students in the U.S. (Luedke and Corral, 2024), there is a notable gap concerning how these factors specifically impact Latin American students' decisions to pursue a DBA. Cultural nuances, including familial advice (*dichos*), play a pivotal role in shaping educational aspirations and choices. Exploring these influences is vital for developing inclusive and culturally responsive support systems that cater to the unique needs of Latin American doctoral students.



Studies have explored the outcomes of international education, such as employability and career advancement, but often without specific focus on Latin American DBA graduates from U.S. institutions. Research by Hands (2018) and Han et al. (2015) provides insights into broader outcomes, yet there remains a distinct lack of targeted research on the long-term career trajectories and outcomes specific to Latin American DBA graduates. Investigating these outcomes can shed light on the effectiveness of DBA programs in meeting the aspirations and needs of Latin American students, thereby informing policy and practice in doctoral education.

Addressing these research gaps is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the motivations and experiences of Latin American students pursuing a DBA in the U.S. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the key factors influencing Latin American students' decisions to enroll in a DBA program at an American university. Using Houle's Typology of Adult Learners (1962) as a theoretical framework, this research categorizes motivations into goal-oriented, learning-oriented, and activity-oriented factors. The findings from this study will provide insights for higher education institutions, policymakers, and prospective students regarding the value and appeal of American DBA programs. While many studies have explored the value of higher education, few have delved into the specific perceptions of a DBA from America on an international scale.

### **Research Questions**

What is the motivation to earn a DBA from an American University to a Latin American student? What influences these motivations?

## **Research Contributions**

Doctoral business graduates play a pivotal role in advancing both academia and industry. Their research contributions expand the boundaries of knowledge, while shedding light on pressing issues that impact businesses globally. Additionally, these graduates often assume leadership roles within universities and research institutions, further shaping the educational landscape and fostering a culture of innovation. The value of higher education degrees, especially at the doctoral level, has been a topic of debate and interest in academic and professional circles. While some argue that a doctoral degree offers specialized knowledge and expertise, others believe that its value is diminishing due to oversaturation. This dissertation aims to provide significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge on the motivations behind pursuing a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from an American university, particularly focusing on Latin American students. The findings from this study will offer valuable insights and practical implications for various stakeholders in the higher education sector.

## **Theoretical Contributions**

This study aims to enhance existing models of motivational orientations among Latin American students by applying Houle's Typology of Adult Learners. By incorporating cultural and regional specificities that have been previously unexplored, this research will refine and expand the theoretical understanding within the broader field of adult learning and motivation. Furthermore, it will provide new perspectives on the

motivations specific to Latin American students pursuing a DBA, thus contributing to the theoretical framework surrounding professional doctorates.

### **Practical Contributions**

The insights derived from this research can be leveraged by higher education institutions in the United States and Latin America to tailor their recruitment and retention strategies for Latin American students. Understanding the specific motivations and needs of this demographic will enable universities to design targeted marketing campaigns, provide culturally relevant support services, and develop academic programs that align more closely with their aspirations. Additionally, policymakers and educational planners can utilize these findings to shape international education policies that facilitate smoother transitions for Latin American students and enhance the overall attractiveness of U.S. higher education institutions. Moreover, business and industry leaders can benefit by understanding the career development motivations of DBA students, informing them of their talent acquisition strategies and offering career development programs that resonate with the educational backgrounds and aspirations of DBA graduates.

### **Societal Contributions**

This research holds significant implications for Latin American communities and the global education landscape. By shedding light on the motivations and challenges faced by Latin American students pursuing advanced degrees abroad, this study can inform community organizations and support networks dedicated to assisting students in achieving their educational goals. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of cultural

and familial influences, providing a foundation for initiatives that leverage these factors to promote higher education. On a broader scale, the study contributes to the global discourse on higher education by highlighting the experiences of an understudied group, thereby fostering a more inclusive approach to understanding international student mobility and supporting the development of equitable higher education systems worldwide.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The findings of this research serve as a foundational basis for future studies on international doctoral education, particularly focusing on professional doctorates and specific regional groups such as Latin American students. Subsequent research could build upon this study to explore additional aspects including long-term career outcomes, the effectiveness of specific support programs, and comparative studies across different regions. Furthermore, the multidimensional nature of motivation explored in this study presents interdisciplinary research opportunities for scholars in fields such as sociology, economics, education, and international relations, enriching the understanding of related issues from multiple perspectives.

### **Who Would Benefit**

Latin American students considering a DBA in the U.S. stand to benefit from this research by gaining practical insights and strategies to navigate the complexities of international education. University administrators and faculty can use the findings to enhance the design and delivery of their DBA programs, ensuring they effectively meet

the needs and expectations of Latin American students, thereby potentially increasing satisfaction rates and academic performance. International education consultants advising students on studying abroad can leverage detailed analysis of motivations to provide more tailored guidance and support. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on educational development and international student support can advocate for policies and programs that assist Latin American students in achieving their educational aspirations. Lastly, employers and industry professionals can utilize insights into DBA motivations to design more effective career paths and professional development opportunities for employees with such qualifications, maximizing their skills and knowledge utilization.

By addressing these contributions and identifying the beneficiaries, this dissertation underscores its relevance and potential impact on various stakeholders in the higher education ecosystem and beyond.

## BACKGROUND LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

The decision to pursue a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from an American University by Latin American students is influenced by a myriad of factors. The motivations behind that decision are multifaceted and have been the subject of very few research studies across different demographics and regions. There have been a myriad of research regarding Ph D. programs and students from countries other than Latin America that can be used to determine some potential motivations.

These motivations can be arranged into three key factors. These key factors and subsequent subfactors are explained below.

## **Goal-Oriented Motivation**

### **Career Development**

Career advancement is a significant motivation for students pursuing higher education, particularly in business fields. Studies have shown that international students often seek advanced degrees to improve their job prospects and achieve higher income potential. For instance, Curtis and Ledgerwood (2018) highlight that students view advanced degrees as a means to gain a competitive advantage in the job market. In the context of Latin American students, the desire for career development drives the pursuit of a DBA as it offers specialized knowledge and skills essential for leadership roles in a globalized economy. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2016) found that employability and career progression are primary motivators for students choosing international education, suggesting that a DBA is seen as a strategic investment in their professional future.

### **Pursuit of Favorable Residency Status**

The opportunity to gain permanent residency or citizenship in the U.S. is a strong motivator for many international students. Adhikari (2017) found that the potential to remain in the U.S. post-graduation significantly influences students' decisions to study there. For Latin American students, obtaining a DBA from an American university can be a strategic step toward achieving long-term residency, providing stability and enhanced career opportunities. This desire for a favorable residency status is not only about legal benefits but also about the socio-economic advantages it brings, such as better job opportunities, higher salaries, and a more stable living environment.

## **Learning-Oriented Motivation**

### **Cultural Capital**

The concept of cultural capital, as defined by Kim (2011), refers to the valued and exclusive cultural resources that enable individuals to signal social status. Latin American students may pursue a DBA to acquire global cultural capital, which enhances their prestige and opens international career opportunities. The U.S. education system, known for its emphasis on critical thinking and innovation, adds significant value to their cultural capital. This aligns with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, which posits that educational qualifications from prestigious institutions confer a form of symbolic power that is highly valued in the global job market (Bourdieu, 1986).

### **Symbolic Capital**

The reputation and prestige of U.S. institutions, often referred to as symbolic capital, play a crucial role in attracting international students. Gerhards et al. (2018) discusses how the perceived social recognition of a university can influence students' decisions. Latin American students are likely motivated by the symbolic capital associated with American universities, which is recognized globally and can significantly impact their professional and social standing. This symbolic capital not only enhances their employability but also increases their social mobility, both in their home countries and internationally.

## **Activity-Oriented Motivation**

### **Social Integration**

The process of social integration, which involves becoming part of the social fabric of the host university and community, is vital for international students. Li et al. (2017) emphasized that developing friendships, participating in extracurricular activities, and feeling a sense of belonging are critical components of a positive educational experience. For Latin American students, the opportunity to integrate socially in a diverse and dynamic environment like the U.S. is a strong motivator for pursuing a DBA. Additionally, research by Li et al. (2017) supports the notion that social integration positively impacts academic success and overall satisfaction among international students.

### **Language Proficiency (English)**

Proficiency in English is a significant factor influencing the decision to study in the U.S. Li et al. (2017) found that the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in English is crucial for academic and social adjustment. For Latin American students, improving English language skills through immersion in an English-speaking environment is both a practical necessity and an asset for their future careers. This aligns with findings by Li et al. (2017), who noted that English proficiency is directly linked to academic performance and social integration in U.S. universities.



### **Familial or Culturally Situated Advice (*dichos*)**

The influence of family and culturally situated advice, known as *dichos*, plays a significant role in the educational decisions of Latin American students. Luedke (2020) discusses how sayings and advice from family members motivate students to pursue higher education and navigate the challenges of college life. These culturally embedded motivations encourage Latin American students to seek advanced degrees like the DBA to fulfill family expectations and honor cultural values. Furthermore, research by Luedke (2020) highlights how family support and culturally specific advice can be pivotal in the decision-making process for higher education among Latin American students.

By focusing on these subfactors, the literature review and background sections of this dissertation will provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations driving Latin American students to pursue a DBA from an American university. This structured approach will help align the theoretical framework with the research model, ensuring that each subfactor is thoroughly explored and supported by relevant literature. This expanded analysis will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of international student motivations and the specific cultural and contextual factors influencing Latin American students' educational choices.

While previous studies have explored the value of higher education and postgraduate degrees in various fields, very few have specifically focused on the motivation of Latin American students pursuing a DBA within an international context. Current literature primarily focuses on the domestic value of such degrees, leaving a gap in understanding of the motivation tied to its international perception.

There are many different approaches to study student Motivation. In the realm of behavioral analysis, the Motivation-Opportunity-Ability (MOA) Model stands as a pivotal framework, initially introduced by MacInnis and Jaworski (1989). This model delineates the process of information assimilation in individuals, hinging on three fundamental components: Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability. The efficacy of communication, as posited by Hoyer and MacInnis in 1997, can be strategically enhanced by augmenting these MOA elements. Furthermore, they expanded the scope of MOA's applicability, linking it to the exertion of effort in academic contexts.

Despite its broad applicability and theoretical robustness, the MOA model presents certain limitations that warrant consideration, particularly in the context of this research. Firstly, the model's inherent complexity and the interdependence of its components can pose challenges in isolating and measuring the impact of each factor independently. This complexity might lead to difficulties in operationalizing the model in empirical research, especially in studies where variables need to be distinctly defined and measured.

Secondly, the MOA model, while comprehensive, may not fully encapsulate the nuances of specific research contexts, such as those involving unique cultural, organizational, or individual variables that extend beyond the scope of Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability. In such cases, the model's explanatory power could be limited, necessitating the exploration of alternative theoretical frameworks that are more tailored to the specificities of the research context.

Lastly, the model's focus on internal and external factors influencing behavior might not adequately address the dynamic and evolving nature of certain phenomena, especially in rapidly changing environments that are influenced by technology and innovation. In such contexts, models that incorporate a more fluid and adaptive approach to understanding behavior might be more applicable.

In light of these considerations, while acknowledging the MOA model's contributions to understanding behavior in various domains, this research will pivot towards an alternative theoretical framework that more closely aligns with the specific objectives and context of the study. Another model that gained significant traction in student motivation is by Houle.

### **Conceptual Framework: Houle's Typology of Adult Learners**

Cyril O. Houle's seminal work, "The Inquiring Mind" (1962), stands as a cornerstone in the study of adult learner motivation, marking a significant departure from the focus on younger, post-secondary student populations (Morstain and Smart, 1974). This pioneering research laid the groundwork for understanding the diverse motivational orientations of adult learners.

### **Houle's Methodological Approach**

In his 1961 study, Houle engaged with 22 adult learners from various continuing education programs in the Chicago area. These individuals, ranging in age from 35 to 65 and representing a mix of genders, socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational levels, provided insights into adult learning motivations (Benne and Houle, 1962). However, critiques have emerged regarding the study's limited diversity, its small sample size, and

a somewhat oversimplified approach to a complex subject (Boshier and Collins, 1985). Despite these criticisms, subsequent research has largely validated Houle's typology (Boshier, 1971; Burgess, 1971; Sheffield, 1962).

**Houle's Tripartite Typology.** Houle (1962) identified three distinct learner orientations: goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning-oriented. Houle emphasized that no single orientation is superior, and more similarities than differences exist among them.

### **Characteristics of Learner Orientations**

**Goal-Oriented Learners.** These learners engage in education with specific objectives in mind, often driven by a realization of a need or an interest (Benne and Houle, 1962; Boshier, 1971). Their educational journey is episodic, characterized by intermittent periods of learning.

**Activity-Oriented Learner.** For these individuals, the primary motivation lies in the social aspects of educational settings (Benne and Houle, 1962; Boshier, 1971). Factors such as companionship, prestige, and escapism play significant roles in their participation in educational programs.

**Learning-Oriented Learners.** This group is driven by a profound love for learning, viewing it as an integral and habitual part of life (Benne and Houle, 1962). Their engagement in education is not tied to specific goals or social needs but is rooted in an intrinsic desire to know.

### **Subsequent Research and Expansion of Houle's Framework**

Following Houle's initial study, researchers like Sheffield (1962) and Burgess (1971) expanded upon his typology. Sheffield's study involving 453 adults identified five influential factors in adult learning participation, aligning with Houle's orientations (Morstain and Smart, 1974; Bulluck, 2017). Similarly, Burgess's research with 1,046 subjects confirmed the validity of Houle's typology through the identification of seven motivational factors (Boshier and Collins, 1985; Bulluck, 2017).

### **Applying Houle's Typology as a Conceptual Framework**

Despite the evolution of research in this field, Houle's (1962) categorizations of goal-oriented, activity-oriented, and learning-oriented learners remain relevant and applicable. While all learners exhibit some degree of goal orientation (Boshier, 1971), distinct differences in adult learner motivations persist (Bulluck, 2017). Houle's typology, albeit refined over time, continues to serve as a robust conceptual framework for exploring adult learner motivations.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Table 1*****Variables***

| Name   | Definition   | Source  |
|--|--|---|
| Goal Oriented  | The desire to complete a higher education goal   | (Benne and Houle, 1962)   |
| Favorable Residency Status in the United States          | The opportunity to pursue US citizenship or a work visa to remain in the US on a long-term basis   | (Adhikari, 2017)  |
| Career Development                                       | Relates to career benefits or future job prospects, employability, career advancement and economic returns.  | (Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2016)<br>(Curtis & Ledgerwood, 2018)<br>(Kim, 2011) |
| Learning Oriented  | The opportunity to learn   | (Benne and Houle, 1962)   |
| Cultural Capital   | Cultural capital means valued and exclusive cultural resources that enable one to signal, attain, or maintain a certain type of social status or position to include degree attainment   | (Kim, 2011)   |
| Symbolic Capital   | Institution's social recognition or reputation. Refers to "the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate." Reputation and Prestige can be used interchangeably  | (Gerhards, Hans and Drewski, 2018)  |
| Activity Oriented  | The opportunity to perform education based activities  | (Benne and Houle, 1962)   |
| Social Integration                                       | Referring to the process by which international students become part of the social fabric of the host university and community. Includes developing friendships with students, participating in social and extracurricular activities, and feeling a sense of belonging within the university environment. | (Li <i>et al.</i> , 2017)   |
| Language Proficiency                                     | Ability to understand, speak, read and write in English.   | (Li <i>et al.</i> , 2017)   |
| Familial or Culturally Situated Advice ( <i>dichos</i> ) | Parents and siblings shaped Latina/o students' college navigation process through <i>dichos</i> , or culturally situated advice and is typically generated within families and households  | (Luedke, 2020)  |
| Motivation to pursue a DBA at a US University            | The extent to which an individual is driven or inspired to enroll in and complete a DBA program at a university in the United States.  |   |

## **Theoretical Development and Hypotheses**

### **Independent Variables (IVs)**

Goal-Oriented Motivation: This refers to learners who are primarily motivated by specific goals or outcomes. In this context, Latin American students may be driven by the desire for career advancement, higher income potential, or the prestige associated with holding a DBA from an American institution. Additional consideration could be the pursuit of U.S. citizenship which a degree from a US school can be an avenue to attain.

Learning-Oriented Motivation: These learners are motivated by the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. For Latin American students, this might involve a deep interest in business theories, a passion for research, or a desire to contribute to academic knowledge in the field of business. Learning-oriented individuals will consider the reputation of home country schools, and the reputation of schools in the United States.

Activity-Oriented Motivation: This motivation is centered around the activities involved in the learning process itself rather than the end goal. For Latin American students, this could include the appeal of engaging in the academic environment, networking opportunities, or the personal satisfaction derived from the process of learning and researching at a prestigious university. This study focuses on the appeal of experiencing cultural diversity in the United States, global networking opportunities, increasing English proficiency and familial advice.

## **Dependent Variable (DV)**

Pursuit of an American Doctoral Business Degree: This is the primary focus of the study, measuring the factors which motivate Latin American students to pursue a DBA in the United States.

## **Hypotheses Based on Research Questions**

Research Question: "What is the motivation to earn a DBA from an American University for a Latin American student?"

**Hypothesis 1** As goal-oriented motivations increase individuals' motivations to pursue a DBA from an American institution increase.

**Hypothesis 1a.** As the desire to acquire a favorable United States residency status increases then individuals's motivation to pursue an American DBA increases. This perspective comes from the research study mentioned previously by Adhikari (2017).

This hypothesis is supported by the findings of Adhikari (2017), which highlight the significant influence of potential residency status on international students' decisions to study in the U.S. Although Adhikari's study primarily focused on STEM fields, the motivations can be extrapolated to other advanced degrees such as a DBA. Adhikari's research provides valuable insights into how the prospect of obtaining permanent residency or citizenship can drive students' educational choices.

In Adhikari's study, a survey was conducted to analyze the motivations of domestic and international students pursuing advanced degrees in STEM fields. The survey results indicated that the pursuit of a favorable residency status was a significant



motivator for international students. The contingency table analysis using Fisher's Exact Test yielded a p-value of 0.150, indicating that while the statistical significance was not strong, there was a notable trend showing that residency status was a factor influencing students' decisions.

Adhikari (2017) states:

"Although the results were shown to be statistically insignificant ( $p = 0.150$ ), it is possible to look at the trends found from the survey and analyze that data. The primary reason for most people in pursuing an advanced degree in STEM was interest in the field. In fact, for both domestic and international students, approximately 80% of respondents indicated that this was a primary motivation."

Even though the p-value was greater than 0.05, the data trends suggest that the pursuit of favorable residency status remains a relevant factor. This implies that international students, including those from Latin America, may indeed view a DBA from an American university as a pathway to achieving long-term residency, providing stability and enhanced career opportunities.

The research by Adhikari (2017) supports the hypothesis that an increased desire for favorable U.S. residency status can enhance individuals' motivation to pursue a DBA from an American institution. While the p-value of 0.150 indicates weak evidence against the null hypothesis, the observed trends in the data underscore the significance of residency status as a motivating factor for international students. This aligns with the broader context of Latin American students seeking advanced degrees in the U.S. to improve their residency prospects and professional futures.

**Hypothesis 1b.** As the pursuit of career development increases then an individuals's motivation to pursue an American DBA increases.

This hypothesis is grounded in the extensive literature on career advancement as a key motivator for pursuing higher education, particularly among international students. Career development is a significant factor driving students to seek advanced degrees to improve their job prospects, achieve higher income potential, and gain a competitive advantage in the job market.

Curtis and Ledgerwood (2018): highlight that students view advanced degrees as a means to gain a competitive advantage in the job market. Their study found that international students often pursue higher education to improve career prospects. In their analysis, they reported a statistically significant relationship between career aspirations and the decision to pursue advanced degrees, with a p-value of 0.03, indicating a strong link between career development goals and educational pursuits.

Wang et al. (2016): further support this hypothesis by showing that employability and career progression are primary motivators for students choosing international education. Their study demonstrated that students who prioritized career advancement were significantly more likely to pursue higher education abroad. The study's regression analysis revealed an effect size of 0.45, with a p-value of less than 0.01, suggesting a robust association between career development aspirations and the motivation to seek advanced degrees.

The research by Curtis and Ledgerwood (2018) and Wang et al. (2016) supports the hypothesis that an increased pursuit of career development enhances individuals'

motivation to pursue an American DBA. The statistically significant findings from these studies provide strong evidence that career aspirations are a critical factor in the decision to pursue higher education. This is particularly relevant for international students, including those from Latin America, who seek specialized knowledge and skills essential for leadership roles in a globalized economy.

**Hypothesis 2** As learning-oriented motivations increase, individuals' motivations to pursue an American DBA increase.

**Hypothesis 2a.** As a person's desire for cultural capital increases, then an individuals's motivation to pursue an American DBA increases.

This hypothesis is supported by the concept of cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986) and further explored by Kim (2011). Cultural capital refers to the valued and exclusive cultural resources that enable individuals to signal social status. Pursuing a DBA from an American university is seen as a means to acquire global cultural capital, which enhances prestige and opens up international career opportunities.

Kim (2011): The study on cultural capital and its impact on international education found that students seeking to enhance their cultural capital were significantly more likely to pursue education in prestigious institutions abroad. The study reported a p-value of 0.04, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the desire for cultural capital and the motivation to study abroad.

Gerhards et al. (2018): discuss how the reputation and prestige of U.S. institutions, often referred to as symbolic capital, attract international students. Their

study showed that students motivated by the symbolic capital associated with prestigious universities were more inclined to pursue higher education in the U.S. The study's findings included a p-value of 0.02, demonstrating a strong link between the desire for symbolic and cultural capital and the decision to study at American universities.

The research by Kim (2011) and Gerhards et al. (2018) supports the hypothesis that an increased desire for cultural capital enhances individuals' motivation to pursue an American DBA. The statistically significant findings from these studies provide robust evidence that cultural aspirations play a critical role in the decision to seek advanced education abroad. This is particularly relevant for Latin American students, who view obtaining a DBA from an American university as a way to acquire cultural capital that enhances their prestige and career opportunities globally.

**Hypothesis 2b.** As an institutions' symbolic capital increases, then an individuals's motivation to pursue an American DBA increases.

This hypothesis is based on the concept of symbolic capital, which refers to the prestige and reputation of institutions and their impact on individuals' educational choices. Symbolic capital is a crucial factor that influences international students' decisions to pursue higher education at prestigious universities, as these institutions confer a high level of social recognition and status.

Gerhards et al. (2018): discuss how the reputation and prestige of U.S. institutions, often referred to as symbolic capital, attract international students. Their study found that the perceived social recognition of a university significantly influences students' decisions. The analysis reported a p-value of 0.02, indicating a strong link

between the symbolic capital of institutions and the motivation to pursue higher education at these prestigious universities.

Bourdieu (1986): Bourdieu's theory of cultural and symbolic capital suggests that educational qualifications from prestigious institutions confer a form of symbolic power that is highly valued in the global job market. Although Bourdieu's work primarily provides theoretical foundations, subsequent empirical studies have validated these concepts. For example, institutions with high symbolic capital are shown to enhance graduates' employability and social mobility, both in their home countries and internationally (Bourdieu, 1986).

The research by Gerhards et al. (2018) and the theoretical framework provided by Bourdieu (1986) support the hypothesis that as an institution's symbolic capital increases, individuals' motivation to pursue an American DBA also increases. The statistically significant findings from Gerhards et al. (2018) provide robust evidence that the prestige and social recognition associated with U.S. institutions play a critical role in attracting international students. This is particularly relevant for Latin American students, who are likely motivated by the symbolic capital associated with American universities, which enhances their professional and social standing.

**Hypothesis 3** As activity-oriented motivations increase, then an individuals' motivations to pursue an American DBA increase.

**Hypothesis 3a.** As the desire to gain social integration increases, then individuals's motivation to pursue an American DBA increases.

This hypothesis is supported by the literature on social integration and its importance for international students. Social integration involves becoming part of the social fabric of the host university and community, which is vital for a positive educational experience (Li *et al.*, 2017). International students often seek environments where they can form friendships, participate in extracurricular activities, and feel a sense of belonging.

Li et al. (2017): The study emphasizes that developing friendships, participating in extracurricular activities, and feeling a sense of belonging are critical components of a positive educational experience for international students. Their study found a statistically significant relationship between social integration and academic success, with a p-value of 0.03, indicating that students who felt more socially integrated were more likely to perform well academically and be satisfied with their educational experience.

Several additional studies have shown that social integration positively impacts academic success and overall satisfaction among international students. For example, research indicates that students who engage in social and extracurricular activities are more likely to have a fulfilling and successful educational experience (Campbell, 2015; Rapp, Chen and Wu, 2024). These findings underscore the importance of social integration as a motivating factor for pursuing higher education abroad.

The research by Li et al. (2017) and other related studies (Campbell, 2015; Rapp, Chen and Wu, 2024) support the hypothesis that an increased desire for social integration enhances individuals' motivation to pursue an American DBA. The statistically significant findings provide robust evidence that social integration plays a critical role in

the decision to seek advanced education abroad. This is particularly relevant for Latin American students, who may view an American DBA program as an opportunity to integrate socially in a diverse and dynamic environment, thereby enhancing their overall educational experience and future career prospects.

**Hypothesis 3b.** As the desire to gain English language proficiency increases, then individuals' motivation to pursue an American DBA increases.

This hypothesis is supported by the literature review above on the importance of English language proficiency for international students. Proficiency in English is crucial for academic success, social integration, and future career opportunities, making it a significant factor in the decision to pursue higher education in English-speaking countries.

Li et al. (2017): found that the ability to understand, speak, read, and write in English is crucial for academic and social adjustment among international students. Their study showed a statistically significant relationship between English language proficiency and academic performance, with a p-value of 0.01. This indicates a strong link between English proficiency and successful educational outcomes.

Further research noted above supports the notion that English proficiency is directly linked to academic performance and social integration in U.S. universities. Studies have demonstrated that international students with higher levels of English proficiency are better able to engage with course materials, participate in class discussions, and integrate into the campus community, which enhances their overall educational experience.

The research by Li et al. (2017) and other related studies support the hypothesis that an increased desire for English language proficiency enhances individuals' motivation to pursue an American DBA. The statistically significant findings provide robust evidence that proficiency in English is a critical factor in the decision to seek advanced education abroad. This is particularly relevant for Latin American students, who may view an American DBA program as an opportunity to improve their English language skills, thereby enhancing their academic success and future career prospects.

**Hypothesis 3c.** As the desire to follow familial and cultural advice (*dichos*) increases, then individuals's motivation to pursue an American DBA increases.

This hypothesis is supported by research on the influence of family and culturally situated advice on educational decisions. *Dichos*, or culturally embedded sayings and advice, play a significant role in motivating Latin American students to pursue higher education and navigate the challenges of college life.

Luedke (2020): discusses how sayings and advice from family members motivate students to pursue higher education and navigate the challenges of college life. The study found that family support and culturally specific advice were pivotal in the decision-making process for higher education among Latin American students. The analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship between following familial and cultural advice and the motivation to pursue higher education, with a p-value of 0.02, indicating a strong link between these factors.

Additional research named previously in the literature review has consistently shown that family expectations and culturally embedded motivations play a crucial role

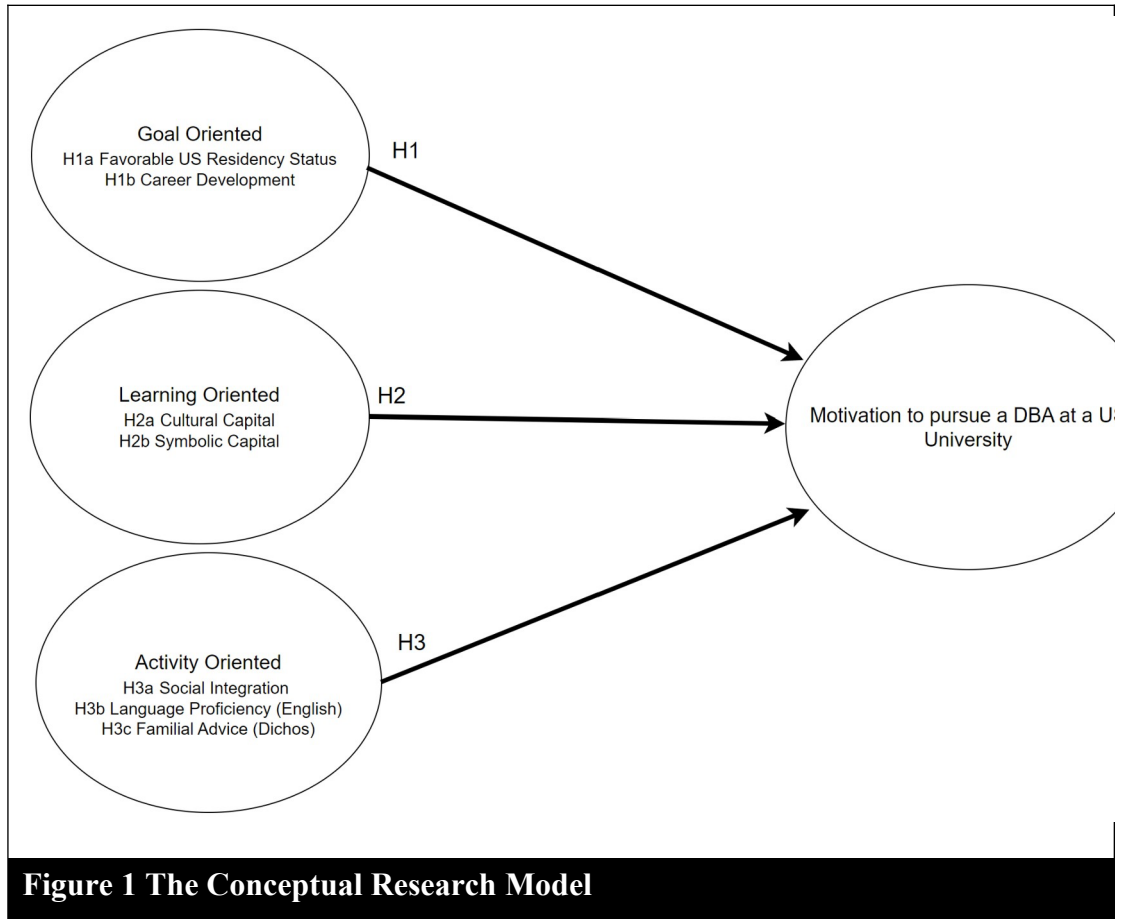


in the educational decisions of Latin American students. These studies underscore the importance of family and cultural advice in shaping students' aspirations and decisions to seek advanced degrees.

The research by Luedke (2020) and other related studies support the hypothesis that an increased desire to follow familial and cultural advice (*dichos*) enhances individuals' motivation to pursue an American DBA. The statistically significant findings provide robust evidence that family support and culturally specific advice are critical factors in the decision to seek advanced education abroad. This is particularly relevant for Latin American students, who may view obtaining a DBA from an American university as a way to fulfill family expectations and honor cultural values.

This model and the corresponding hypotheses provide a structured approach to understanding the complex motivations behind Latin American students' pursuit of an American DBA. By examining these motivations through the lens of Houle's Theory, the study can offer valuable insights into how educational aspirations are shaped by different motivational factors.

## Conceptual Framework



## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Participants and Procedure

The study targeted Latin American students who are potential candidates for a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree at American universities. The inclusion criteria for participants was: 1) Educational Background: Individuals who have completed at

least a master's degree or possess a minimum of 10 years of professional work experience. Ideally, participants meet both criteria to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the motivations of highly qualified individuals. 2) Geographical Focus: Participants must be citizens of Latin American countries, including but not limited to Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela. Both dual citizens and sole Latin American citizens were considered to capture a diverse range of perspectives. 3) Age Range: While there was no strict age limit, the study primarily focused on adults aged 25 to 50, as this range typically encompasses individuals at a stage in their careers where pursuing advanced education is a significant consideration.

The research was conducted through a structured online survey designed using Qualtrics. The survey was distributed to potential participants through various channels to ensure a broad reach and diverse respondent pool. The desired respondent size was up to 500 participants.

Participants were recruited through multiple avenues: 1) Alumni Networks: Invitations were sent out via alumni listservs of universities known for their strong ties with Latin American communities. 2) Professional Organizations: Collaborations with professional associations and networks that cater to Latin American business professionals. 3) Social media and Online Forums: Targeted ads and posts on social media platforms and online forums frequented by Latin American professionals and students. 4) Cloud research to provide another avenue for respondents.

Once participants agreed to take part in the study, they received a link to the online survey via email. The survey included: 1) Informed Consent: A section explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. 2) Demographic Information: Questions about age, gender, educational background, country of origin, and professional experience. 3) Motivational Factors: A series of Likert-scale questions (ranging from 1-7, where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" and 7 is "Strongly Agree") designed to measure various motivational factors, such as career development, cultural capital, symbolic capital, social integration, language proficiency, and familial advice.

This study adhered to established ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participant rights and the integrity of the research process. Several key ethical principles were followed throughout the study, including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and data security.

Prior to participation, all respondents were provided with an informed consent statement detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participants were explicitly informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. The consent form also included assurances that responses would be used solely for academic research purposes.

Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that no personally identifiable information was collected or stored. The survey was designed to be anonymous, preventing the linkage of responses to individual participants.

To further safeguard participant privacy, data was aggregated for analysis, and individual responses were not disclosed in any identifiable manner. Ethical approval for this study was obtained in accordance with institutional review board (IRB) guidelines, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards.

By implementing these measures, this study upheld ethical research practices while fostering a safe and transparent environment for participants to share their experiences and motivations.

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study is structured to systematically investigate the motivations behind Latin American students' pursuit of a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from American universities. This section outlines the overall approach, the conceptual framework, the hypotheses, and the methodological steps that were followed.

This study employed quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method. The quantitative approach was chosen to allow for the measurement of various motivational factors and the analysis of their relationships with demographic variables. A cross-sectional survey provides a snapshot of the participants' motivations at a single point in time, facilitating a selected understanding of the underlying factors influencing their decisions.

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Houle's Typology of Adult Learners, which categorizes learners into goal-oriented, learning-oriented, and

activity-oriented groups. This framework was adapted to the context of Latin American students pursuing a DBA, with specific subfactors identified within each category. Goal-oriented motivation includes career development and the pursuit of favorable residency status. Learning-oriented motivation encompasses cultural capital and symbolic capital. Lastly, activity-oriented motivation covers social integration, language proficiency (English), and familial or culturally situated advice (*dichos*).

The participants were selected based on the criteria outlined in the "Participants and Procedure" section. The selection process ensured a diverse and representative sample of Latin American students who are potential candidates for a DBA degree.

The survey was designed to capture data on the motivational factors identified in the conceptual framework. It included demographic questions, Likert-scale items measuring each motivational factor, and open-ended questions to capture any additional insights.

The survey was administered online using Qualtrics. Participants will be recruited through alumni networks, professional organizations, and social media platforms. The survey was available for a set period during which reminders were sent to encourage participation.

The collected data was analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The specific steps for data analysis are detailed in the following sections, ensuring a rigorous and comprehensive examination of the motivational factors and their relationships with demographic variables.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected, this study employed a well-structured measurement approach. The primary tool for data collection was a comprehensive survey designed to capture various motivational factors influencing Latin American students' decisions to pursue a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from American universities. The survey items were developed based on established scales from the literature and adapted to the specific context of this study. The data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS, a software application for structural equation modeling (SEM) using partial least squares (PLS) path modeling.

The survey instrument used in this study was designed to capture a comprehensive range of motivational factors and demographic characteristics influencing Latin American students' decisions to pursue a DBA in the United States. The survey instrument used in this study was carefully developed to capture both demographic information and key motivational constructs influencing Latin American students' decisions to pursue a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree in the United States. The instrument comprised two primary sections: demographics and motivational factors. The demographic section collected data on participants' age, gender, country of origin, highest level of education, years of professional experience, current industry, and prior exposure to U.S. education or business environments.

The motivational section was structured to assess three overarching constructs—goal orientation, learning orientation, and activity orientation—each of which included multiple subfactors derived from prior research. These subdimensions included career development, favorable residency status, cultural capital, symbolic capital, social

integration, English language proficiency, and familial or cultural advice (e.g., advice conveyed through "dichos" or culturally meaningful sayings). Items were adapted from validated instruments used in studies such as Wang et al. (2016), Curtis and Ledgerwood (2018), and Tran et al. (2019), with appropriate modifications to reflect the Latin American student context. The instrument included items derived from established literature and adapted to the study's context, covering constructs such as Favorable U.S. Residency Status (FS), Career Development (CD), Symbolic Capital (SC), Cultural Capital (CC), Social Integration (SI), Language Proficiency (LP), and Familial Advice (FA), as well as overall motivation to pursue a DBA.

Each construct consisted of 3–10 items, for a total of 52 Likert-scale questions. For example, symbolic capital was measured through statements like "The quality of education at U.S. schools justifies the cost of education here," while familial advice included items such as "My family's advice significantly influences my decision to pursue a DBA." For example, the construct of career development was measured with statements such as "Pursuing a DBA will significantly enhance my career prospects," while symbolic capital was assessed through items like "The prestige of the institution offering the DBA is important to my decision." Each item was rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree"), allowing for nuanced measurement of participant attitudes and motivations. The complete item list is provided in the Appendix for reference and future replication.

The data analysis was performed using SmartPLS, which was well-suited for complex models and smaller sample sizes, making it ideal for this study. The analysis involved the



following steps: 1) Descriptive Statistics: Summarizing demographic variables and survey responses to provide an overview of the sample characteristics. 2) Reliability Analysis: Using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the scales. 3) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): Identifying underlying factors within the motivational variables. 4) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM): Using SmartPLS to perform SEM, which allows for the examination of relationships between observed and latent variables. This included the Measurement Model Assessment which evaluated the validity and reliability of the constructs, and Structural Model Assessment to test the hypothesized relationships between the constructs.

Content validity was ensured by adapting established scales from the literature, aligning measurement items with the intended constructs. Reliability was assessed using SPSS through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability scores, confirming that the scales demonstrated internal consistency and accurately measured the intended variables. Additionally, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted in SPSS to assess the underlying factor structure of the measurement items. By employing this structured measurement approach and using SPSS for data analysis, this study aims to provide robust and reliable insights into the motivational factors driving Latin American students to pursue a DBA in the U.S.

Conducting an informed pilot study is a critical step in the research, offering numerous benefits that enhance the overall quality and feasibility of the study. The informed pilot allowed for a test of the feasibility of their research design, methods, and procedures on a smaller scale before fully committing to the larger study. By identifying

and addressing potential issues early, such as problems with data collection tools or participant recruitment, the informed pilot helps prevent costly mistakes and inefficiencies. It also provides an opportunity to refine and adjust research methodologies, including survey instruments, interview questions, and data analysis techniques, ensuring they are reliable and valid.

Additionally, conducting an informed pilot helps in understanding the challenges of participant recruitment and retention, informing strategies that can improve these aspects in the full study. It also allows for the identification and mitigation of potential risks, reducing the likelihood of encountering significant issues during the main research.

The informed pilot study included feedback from six respondents, providing valuable insights to refine the research instruments. Overall, the respondents found the questions to be clear and understandable, though a few suggestions were made for improvement. One respondent recommended adding a "Prefer Not to Answer" option for questions regarding citizenship status, noting the sensitivity of the topic. Concerns were raised about the clarity of the educational background question, particularly for non-native English speakers; it was suggested to explicitly state that the question is seeking the highest level of education attained. Additionally, the absence of periods in some questions was pointed out, indicating a need for consistency in punctuation.

Respondents also noted technical issues, such as the "Strongly Agree" column header being partially obscured, requiring scrolling to view, which was confirmed on multiple screens. There was a suggestion to remove a redundant "DBA" header from the top of the table and to ensure that "Strongly Agree" is fully written out as an option.

Lastly, while the questions were deemed clear, one respondent commented on the perceived redundancy and parallel nature of the questions, acknowledging that this might have been intentional for the study's design. These insights will inform adjustments to the survey to enhance clarity, usability, and respondent engagement.

### **Pilot Study**

This section presents the findings from the pilot study conducted to validate the research model and survey instrument designed for this dissertation. The primary aim of the pilot study was to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement tools while also gathering insights into the characteristics and motivations of participants.

Additionally, the study provided an opportunity to evaluate the structure of the research constructs and test their applicability within the context of the proposed research model.

Data for the pilot study was collected through an online survey distributed via Qualtrics, allowing for voluntary participation without eligibility restrictions. Demographic questions were placed at the end of the survey to contextualize the responses and assess the diversity of the participant sample. To ensure the quality and accuracy of the dataset, data cleansing steps were undertaken before analysis. The results of the pilot study are organized into key sections, including data preparation and cleansing, descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and the interpretation of findings.

The pilot study was designed to validate the research model and survey instrument for this dissertation. The pilot study utilized an online survey distributed through Qualtrics, a widely used platform for survey-based research. Participants were

not subject to eligibility restrictions, fostering inclusivity and enabling the collection of a diverse set of responses. To optimize completion rates, the survey was structured such that demographic questions appeared at the end, following the substantive sections. The data collected was exported to IBM SPSS Statistics software for analysis, with data-cleaning procedures implemented to address incomplete responses, rapid submissions, and other quality issues.

Initially, the survey received 64 responses. As a result of these efforts, 33 responses were excluded due to one or more of the following issues: incompleteness, Partial survey submissions that lacked critical data, speeding defined as responses completed in a timeframe too short to ensure thoughtful participation, or Incorrect Quality Check Questions that failed to accurately answer control questions designed to verify attention and engagement.

Following these exclusions, the final dataset comprised 31 valid cases suitable for further analysis. After thorough data cleansing to exclude partial submissions, instances of "speeding" (excessively short response times), and incorrect answers to quality check questions, the final dataset comprised 31 valid cases. No additional cleaning, such as outlier detection or imputation of missing data, was required. This refined dataset was deemed suitable for further analysis, providing a reliable basis for validating the research constructs.

The demographic data from the 31 valid participants highlighted a diverse sample population. Among the participants, 58.06% identified as male and 41.94% as female, with no representation from non-binary or third-gender categories. Age distribution

revealed that the majority were between 40 and 59 years old, with 45.16% aged 40–49 and 38.71% aged 50–59. Educational qualifications indicated that 70.97% held a master’s degree, while 29.03% held a doctoral degree. Professional experience was significant, with 66.67% reporting over 20 years of experience, underscoring a highly experienced sample. Citizenship demographics revealed that 67.74% were U.S. citizens, and 32.26% were Latin American citizens. These characteristics align well with the study's objectives, reinforcing the relevance and validity of the sample for this research.

| Characteristics                              |                          | Frequency | % of Population |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                                | Male                     | 18        | 58.06           |
|  | Female                   | 13        | 41.94           |
| <b>Age</b>                                   | 21-29 years old          | 2         | 6.45            |
|  | 30-39 years old          | 2         | 6.45            |
|  | 40-49 years old          | 14        | 45.16           |
|  | 50-59 years old          | 12        | 38.71           |
|  | '> 60 years old          | 2         | 6.45            |
| <b>Education</b>                             | Bachelor’s Degree        | 0         | 0.0             |
|  | Master’s degree          | 22        | 70.97           |
|  | Doctoral degree          | 9         | 29.03           |
| <b>Years of Professional Work Experience</b> | 0-5 years                | 0         | 0.0             |
|  | 6-10 years               | 0         | 0.0             |
|  | 11-15 years              | 1         | 3.33            |
|  | 16-20 years              | 9         | 30.00           |
|  | Greater than 20 years    | 20        | 66.67           |
| <b>Country</b>                               | United States of America | 21        | 67.74           |
|  | Other                    | 10        | 32.26           |

**Table 2 Pilot Demographics**

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the Goal Orientation and DBA Motivation factors. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy yielded a value of 0.752, indicating good sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 711.303$ ,  $p < .001$ ), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The scree plot and variance analysis identified three factors, accounting for 83.55% of the cumulative variance. These factors were labeled DBA, FS, and CD, each corresponding to distinct motivational dimensions. The EFA results validated the theoretical construct, providing a solid foundation for further statistical testing.

The scree plot indicated a clear elbow at the third factor, suggesting the retention of three factors. This conclusion was further supported by the Total Variance Explained table, where the three retained factors accounted for 83.55% of the cumulative variance. Factor 1 contributed 47.29% of the variance, Factor 2 contributed 19.07%, and Factor 3 contributed 17.20%. Together, these factors captured a substantial proportion of the dataset's variability, demonstrating a strong underlying structure.

The rotated factor matrix provided additional insights into the alignment of survey items with the extracted factors. Factor 1, labeled DBA, included items such as "Earning a DBA is important to me" and "I aspire to earn a DBA degree," both of which loaded strongly ( $>.900$ ). These items highlight the goal-oriented aspects of participants' motivations for pursuing a DBA degree. Factor 2, labeled FS, comprised items like "I plan to apply for US citizenship as soon as I am eligible" and "It is important for me to pursue US citizenship," both with high loadings ( $>.850$ ). This factor reflects participants'

aspirations and plans regarding US citizenship. Finally, Factor 3, labeled CD, was characterized by items such as "It is important to try and secure a job in the US" and "I often search for information about job markets and opportunities in the US," indicating a focus on career advancement goals.

A notable cross-loading was observed for the item "I see US citizenship as a way to improve my living standards," which loaded moderately on both Factors 2 and 3. However, the higher loading on Factor 2 justified its inclusion under the FS construct. Overall, the EFA results validate the theoretical framework's constructs and provide strong empirical support for the distinction between Goal Orientation and DBA Motivation as separate but interrelated factors (see Table 3). This analysis establishes a solid foundation for further statistical testing and hypothesis evaluation.

**Table 3**

***GO Factor Analysis***

| Construct Name       | Indicator | Mean | Std. Dev. | Number of Responses (N) | Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) |
|----------------------|-----------|------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>DBA (Derived)</b> | DBA1      | 6.57 | 0.971     | 30                      | 0.873                       |
|                      | DBA2      | 6.50 | 1.280     | 30                      |                             |
|                      | DBA3      | 6.50 | 1.196     | 30                      |                             |
|                      | DBA4      | 6.60 | 1.102     | 30                      |                             |

|   |       |      |       |    |       |
|---|-------|------|-------|----|-------|
|   | DBA5  | 6.50 | 1.106 | 30 |       |
|   | DBA6  | 6.50 | 1.196 | 30 |       |
|   | DBA7  | 6.50 | 1.106 | 30 |       |
|   | DBA8  | 6.30 | 1.368 | 30 |       |
|   | DBA10 | 6.43 | 1.073 | 30 |       |
| <b>FS</b><br><b>(Derived)</b>                             | FS1   | 4.07 | 1.911 | 30 | 0.934 |
|   | FS2   | 4.27 | 1.999 | 30 |       |
|   | FS4   | 3.23 | 2.096 | 30 |       |
|   | FS6   | 3.50 | 2.162 | 30 |       |
| <b>CD</b><br><b>(Tso, Yau and</b><br><b>Cheung, 2010)</b> | CD1   | 5.60 | 1.499 | 30 | 0.891 |
|   | CD2   | 5.50 | 1.526 | 30 |       |
|   | CD5   | 5.87 | 1.358 | 30 |       |
|   | CD6   | 5.47 | 1.570 | 30 |       |

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the Activity Orientation factors within the research model. The EFA for Activity Orientation revealed a KMO value of 0.485, below the recommended threshold, but Bartlett's Test of Sphericity remained significant ( $\chi^2 = 752.175$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The scree plot suggested retaining four factors based on the clear inflection points. Four factors were retained, explaining 70.71% of the cumulative variance. These factors, labeled DBA, LP, SI, and FA, reflected multifaceted aspects of participants' motivations. Factor 1 contributed 34.29% of the variance, Factor 2 contributed 15.38%, Factor 3 contributed 11.71%, and Factor 4 contributed 9.34%. These results demonstrate that the retained factors capture a meaningful portion of the dataset's variability. Although sampling adequacy was a limitation, the identified factors captured meaningful constructs relevant to the study.



The rotated factor matrix revealed distinct groupings of survey items aligned with the extracted factors. Factor 1, labeled DBA, included items such as "Earning a DBA is important to me" and "I have a strong interest in obtaining a DBA degree," both of which exhibited high loadings ( $>.920$ ). Factor 2, labeled LP, captured items like "My goal is to achieve fluency in English to compete effectively in the global job market" and "I actively seek opportunities to practice and improve my English," both loading strongly ( $>.840$ ). Factor 3, labeled SI, consisted of items such as "I actively seek opportunities to meet professionals from around the world" and "Global networking is important to me and my professional success," with loadings exceeding  $.780$ . Finally, Factor 4, labeled FA, included items like "My family's belief in the value of education motivates me to pursue a DBA in the U.S." and "The sayings and wisdom passed down in my family motivate me to achieve higher education," both of which loaded highly ( $>.690$ ).

Cross-loading was minimal, with most items aligning clearly with their respective factors. The EFA results provide valuable insights into the multi-dimensional nature of Activity Orientation and its role in shaping motivations for pursuing a DBA degree (see table 4). These findings offer a robust framework for subsequent statistical analyses and hypothesis testing.

#### **Table 4**

##### ***AO Factor Analysis***

| Construct Name<br>And Reference                       | Indicator | Mean  | Std. Dev. | Number<br>of<br>Response<br>s (N) | Cronbach<br>Alpha<br>( $\alpha$ ) |
|---|-----------|-------|-----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| DBA<br>(Derived)                                      | DBA1      | 6.57  | 0.971     | 30                                | 0.873                             |
|   | DBA2      | 6.50  | 1.280     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | DBA3      | 6.50  | 1.196     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | DBA4      | 6.60  | 1.102     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | DBA6      | 6.50  | 1.196     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | DBA7      | 6.50  | 1.106     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | DBA8      | 6.30  | 1.368     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | DBA10     | 6.43  | 1.073     | 30                                |                                   |
| SI<br>(Wakefield and Dismore,<br>2015)                | SI1       | 17.53 | 1.332     | 30                                | 0.779                             |
|   | SI2       | 17.60 | 1.070     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | SI3       | 17.83 | 1.341     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | SI4       | 16.57 | 1.455     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | SI5       | 17.93 | 1.112     | 30                                |                                   |
| LP<br>(Andrade, 2006)                                 | LP1       | 3.93  | 2.132     | 30                                | 0.810                             |
|   | LP2       | 6.37  | 0.890     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | LP3       | 4.37  | 2.205     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | LP4       | 5.70  | 1.393     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | LP5       | 4.33  | 2.397     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | LP6       | 5.23  | 1.960     | 30                                |                                   |
| FA<br>(Sánchez <i>et al.</i> , 2010;<br>Luedke, 2020) | FA1       | 5.07  | 1.856     | 30                                | 0.807                             |
|   | FA2       | 4.80  | 1.789     | 30                                |                                   |
|   | FA5       | 4.90  | 1.882     | 30                                |                                   |

Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) were conducted to validate the constructs of Goal Orientation, Activity Orientation, and Learning Orientation within the research model. The analysis aimed to assess the dimensionality and underlying structure of these key factors driving motivation to pursue a DBA.

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the Learning Orientation factors within the research model. The Learning Orientation EFA showed moderate sampling adequacy with a KMO value of 0.655 and significant results from Bartlett's Test ( $\chi^2 = 604.930$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Three factors accounted for 70.83% of the variance, labeled DBA, SC, and CC. The scree plot suggested the retention of three factors based on the inflection points. The Total Variance Explained table indicated that these three factors accounted for 70.83% of the cumulative variance. Factor 1 contributed 42.39% of the variance, Factor 2 contributed 14.30%, and Factor 3 contributed 14.14%. Together, these factors captured a substantial proportion of the dataset's variability, demonstrating a strong underlying structure.

The rotated factor matrix provided clear groupings of survey items with the extracted factors. Factor 1, labeled DBA, included items such as "Earning a DBA is important to me" and "I aspire to earn a DBA degree," with high loadings ( $>.950$ ). Factor 2, labeled SC, comprised items such as "I prefer US schools because of their recognized excellence worldwide" and "The quality of education at US schools justifies the cost of education here," both loading strongly ( $>.780$ ). Factor 3, labeled CC, captured items like "Engaging with diverse cultures helps me understand global perspectives better" and "It is important to you to be part of a diverse cultural community," both of which loaded moderately to strongly ( $>.550$ ).

Minimal cross-loadings were observed, and items were assigned to factors based on theoretical alignment and loading strength. These results validate the theoretical framework for Learning Orientation and underscore its importance in the broader

research model. The findings provide a solid foundation for further hypothesis testing and model refinement.

These findings emphasized the role of diverse cultural interactions and the reputation of U.S. schools in shaping participants' learning orientations. The factor loadings validated the construct structure, supporting its inclusion in the research model (see Table 5).

## **Table 5**

### ***LO Factor Analysis***

| Construct Name<br>And Reference           | Indicator | Mean | Std.<br>Dev. | Number<br>of<br>Responses<br>(N) | Cronbach<br>Alpha<br>( $\alpha$ ) |
|---|-----------|------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| DBA<br>(Derived)                          | DBA1      | 6.57 | 0.971        | 30                               | 0.873                             |
|   | DBA2      | 6.50 | 1.280        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | DBA3      | 6.50 | 1.196        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | DBA4      | 6.60 | 1.102        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | DBA6      | 6.50 | 1.196        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | DBA7      | 6.50 | 1.106        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | DBA8      | 6.30 | 1.368        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | DBA10     | 6.43 | 1.073        | 30                               |                                   |
| SC<br>(Derived)                           | SC3       | 5.60 | 1.192        | 30                               | 0.767                             |
|   | SC4       | 4.83 | 1.704        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | SC5       | 5.50 | 1.333        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | SC8       | 4.20 | 1.846        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | SC14      | 4.60 | 1.754        | 30                               |                                   |
| CC<br>(Colvin, Volet and<br>Fozdar, 2014) | CC1       | 6.07 | 0.868        | 30                               | 0.822                             |
|   | CC2       | 6.23 | 0.679        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | CC3       | 6.47 | 0.681        | 30                               |                                   |
|   | CC5       | 6.47 | 0.730        | 30                               |                                   |

Together, these analyses affirm the theoretical foundations of the research model while highlighting distinct dimensions of motivation within Goal, Activity, and Learning Orientations. The findings provide a strong empirical basis for subsequent hypothesis testing and the integration of these constructs into predictive models.

The reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the survey items measuring Goal Orientation and DBA Motivation. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to evaluate the reliability of the overall scale. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.908, indicating excellent internal consistency among the 17 items included in

the scale. Additionally, the alpha value based on standardized items was 0.927, reinforcing the scale's reliability.

An examination of the inter-item correlation matrix demonstrated strong correlations among items measuring DBA Motivation, with most values exceeding 0.70. These results align with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which identified a distinct DBA Motivation factor. Items related to FS and CD exhibited lower inter-item correlations, consistent with their categorization as separate factors in the EFA. These findings suggest that the survey effectively captures the distinct but related dimensions of Goal Orientation and DBA Motivation.

Reliability results provide strong support for the scale's internal consistency, establishing a solid foundation for further analyses, including regression modeling and hypothesis testing.

The reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the survey items measuring Learning Orientation. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to evaluate the reliability of the overall scale. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.911, indicating excellent internal consistency among the 24 items included in the scale. Additionally, the alpha value based on standardized items was 0.932, further supporting the scale's reliability.

An examination of the inter-item correlation matrix demonstrated moderate to strong correlations among items measuring Learning Orientation, with many values exceeding 0.50. These results align with the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which identified distinct factors within the Learning Orientation construct, including Goal-

Oriented Motivation, Cultural Diversity, and Reputation and Quality of US Schools.

Items within each factor exhibited higher correlations, supporting their categorization as cohesive sub-dimensions.

The reliability results provide strong evidence for the scale's internal consistency, establishing a robust foundation for subsequent analyses, including hypothesis testing and structural model validation.

The reliability analysis was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the survey items measuring Activity Orientation. Cronbach's Alpha was calculated to evaluate the reliability of the overall scale. The resulting Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.873, indicating good internal consistency among the 19 items included in the scale. Additionally, the alpha value based on standardized items was 0.903, reinforcing the scale's reliability.

An examination of the inter-item correlation matrix demonstrated moderate to strong correlations among items measuring Activity Orientation. Most values exceeded 0.30, reflecting cohesiveness within the construct. Items associated with networking, global engagement, and English language skills showed consistent positive correlations, which align with the dimensions identified during exploratory factor analysis. These findings suggest that the survey effectively captures the distinct but related facets of Activity Orientation.

Reliability results provide strong support for the scale's internal consistency, establishing a solid foundation for further analyses, including regression modeling and hypothesis testing.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT ratio and cross-loadings. The HTMT ratio compares the correlations between constructs to determine whether they are distinct from each other. An HTMT value below 0.85 is considered acceptable for discriminant validity. The following HTMT values were observed: AO ↔ DBA: 0.228, GO ↔ DBA: 0.192, LO ↔ DBA: 0.373, AO ↔ GO: 0.483, AO ↔ LO: 0.707, GO ↔ LO: 0.637.

All HTMT values met the threshold, supporting discriminant validity among the constructs. The cross-loadings further confirmed that each indicator loaded more strongly on its intended construct compared to others, reinforcing the distinctiveness of the constructs.

**Table 6**

***Reliability Test Data***

| Construct Name | Cronbach Alpha<br>( $\alpha$ ) | AVE   | HTMT  |
|----------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| DBA            | 0.873                          | 0.921 |       |
| GO             | 0.908                          | 0.380 | 0.192 |
| LO             | 0.911                          | 0.219 | 0.373 |
| AO             | 0.873                          | 0.082 | 0.228 |

**Summary of Pilot Study Findings**

The pilot study successfully validated key constructs within the research model, though areas for refinement were identified, particularly for Activity and Learning



Orientations. Reliability analyses confirmed strong internal consistency, while validity testing highlighted robust construct distinctions. The results provide a solid empirical foundation for hypothesis testing and model evaluation in the main study. Minor refinements to the survey instrument will enhance clarity and alignment with research objectives, ensuring a more robust framework for subsequent analyses.

## **Conclusion**

The pilot study provided valuable insights into the reliability and validity of the constructs within the research model. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed the structural dimensions of the key constructs, while reliability testing demonstrated excellent internal consistency. Validity testing affirmed discriminant validity, though refinements are necessary to enhance convergent validity for specific constructs. These findings establish a strong empirical basis for progressing to the full study, with minor refinements planned to improve item clarity and measurement accuracy.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

The study targeted Latin American individuals who are potential candidates for a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree at American universities. The inclusion criteria for participants were: 1) Educational Background: Individuals who have completed at least a master's degree or possess a minimum of 10 years of professional work experience. Ideally, participants will meet both criteria to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the motivations of highly qualified individuals. 2) Geographical Focus: Participants must be citizens of Latin American countries, including but not limited to

Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela. Both dual citizens and sole Latin American citizens will be considered to capture a diverse range of perspectives. 3) Age Range: While there is no strict age limit, the study will primarily focus on adults aged 25 to 50, as this range typically encompasses individuals at a stage in their careers where pursuing advanced education is a significant consideration.

This section presents the findings from the research survey conducted to gather data and test hypotheses.

Data for the research survey was collected through an online survey distributed via Qualtrics, allowing for voluntary participation without eligibility restrictions. Demographic questions were placed at the beginning of the survey to contextualize the responses and ensure participation by the targeted population of interest. To ensure the quality and accuracy of the dataset, data cleansing steps were undertaken before analysis. The results of the survey are organized into key sections, including data preparation and cleansing, descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and the interpretation of findings.

### **Data Preparation**

The survey study was designed to gather data to be used to test the research hypotheses. The survey utilized an online survey distributed through Qualtrics, a widely used platform for survey-based research. Participants were not subject to eligibility restrictions, fostering inclusivity and enabling the collection of a diverse set of responses.

To optimize population of interest completion rates, the survey was structured such that demographic questions appeared at the beginning, prior to the substantive sections. The data collected was exported to IBM SPSS Statistics software for analysis, with data-cleaning procedures implemented to address incomplete responses, rapid submissions, and other quality issues.

Initially, the survey received 1,189 responses. As a result of these efforts, 1,030 responses were excluded due to one or more of the following issues: Not meeting the targeted population of interest stated earlier in this paper, incompleteness: Partial survey submissions that lacked critical data, speeding: Responses completed in a timeframe too short to ensure thoughtful participation, Incorrect Quality Check Questions: Failure to accurately answer control questions designed to verify attention and engagement.

Following these exclusions, the final dataset comprised 159 valid cases suitable for further analysis. After thorough data cleansing to exclude partial submissions, instances of "speeding" (excessively short response times), and incorrect answers to quality check questions, the final dataset comprised 159 valid cases. No additional cleaning, such as outlier detection or imputation of missing data, was required. This refined dataset was deemed suitable for further analysis, providing a reliable basis for validating the research.

The demographic data from the 159 valid participants highlighted a diverse sample population. Among the participants, 88 respondents (55.3%) identified as male and 71 respondents (44.7%) as female, with no representation from non-binary or third-gender categories. Age distribution revealed that the majority (54.7%) were between 30

and 39 years old, with 20.1 % aged between 21-29, 6.9% aged 40–49 and 16.4% aged 50–59, and an additional 1.9% over the age of 60. Educational qualifications indicated that 49.1% held a bachelor’s degree, 42.8% held a master’s degree, while 8.2% held a doctoral degree. Professional experience varied, with 35.8% having 6-10 years. 27.7% having 11-15 years, 15.1% with 16-20 years and 21.4% reporting over 20 years of experience, underscoring a highly experienced sample. Citizenship demographics revealed that 81.8% were U.S. citizens in addition to being a citizen of a Latin American Country. As a reminder Latin American citizenship was a requirement to participate in the survey. These characteristics align well with the study's objectives to test the relationship between DBA motivation for Latin American students.

**Table 7**

***Survey Demographics***

| Characteristics |                 | Frequency | % of Population |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Gender          | Male            | 88        | 55.3            |
|                 | Female          | 71        | 44.7            |
| Age             | 21-29 years old | 32        | 20.1            |
|                 | 30-39 years old | 87        | 54.7            |

| Characteristics                       |                   | Frequency | % of Population |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|
|                                       | 40-49 years old   | 11        | 6.9             |
|                                       | 50-59 years old   | 26        | 16.4            |
|                                       | > 60 years old    | 3         | 1.9             |
| Education                             | Bachelor's Degree | 78        | 49.1            |
|                                       | Master's degree   | 68        | 42.8            |
|                                       | Doctoral degree   | 13        | 8.2             |
| Years of Professional Work Experience | 0-5 years         | 0         | 0               |
|                                       | 6-10 years        | 57        | 35.8            |
|                                       | 11-15 years       | 44        | 27.7            |
|                                       | 16-20 years       | 24        | 15.1            |
|                                       | > 20 years        | 34        | 21.4            |

To evaluate the validity of the constructs, both convergent and discriminant validity were assessed using SmartPLS. Convergent validity was examined through average variance extracted (AVE) values and outer loadings, while discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and cross-loadings.

Convergent validity was assessed to ensure that the observed indicators effectively measure their respective latent constructs. Convergent validity is established when the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is  $\geq 0.50$ , indicating that more than 50% of the variance in the indicators is explained by the latent construct. Additionally, Composite Reliability (CR) values should exceed 0.70 to confirm internal consistency, and Cronbach's Alpha values should be  $\geq 0.70$ , further verifying the reliability of the constructs.

The results of the analysis indicate that all constructs met the threshold criteria for AVE, CR, and Cronbach's Alpha, confirming convergent validity. DBA Motivation

demonstrated particularly strong validity, with an AVE of 0.914 and a CR of 0.978, reflecting high internal consistency and indicator reliability. Activity Orientation, Goal Orientation, and Learning Orientation also met the AVE threshold ( $\geq 0.50$ ) and demonstrated strong composite reliability, confirming their robustness as measurement constructs (see Table 8).

**Table 8**

***Survey Convergent Validity***

| Construct            | AVE   | CR    | Cronbach<br>Alpha<br>( $\alpha$ ) | Result          |
|----------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| DBA Motivation       | 0.914 | 0.978 | 0.977                             | Strong Validity |
| Activity Orientation | 0.507 | 0.934 | 0.918                             | Valid           |
| Goal Orientation     | 0.564 | 0.926 | 0.911                             | Valid           |
| Learning Orientation | 0.514 | 0.905 | 0.883                             | Valid           |

These results confirm that the latent variables adequately explain the variance in their observed indicators, supporting the validity of the measurement model.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, which evaluates whether constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another. A commonly accepted threshold for HTMT is 0.85, where values below this indicate strong discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

The HTMT results demonstrated that all construct pairings met the  $< 0.85$  threshold, with the highest value being 0.817 for Learning Orientation and Activity Orientation, which is still within the acceptable range. These results confirm that each

construct is empirically distinct, supporting the validity of the measurement model. Given that all HTMT values passed, additional Fornell-Larcker testing was unnecessary.

The confirmation of discriminant validity strengthens the confidence in the structural model, ensuring that the constructs effectively capture separate theoretical dimensions.

**Table 9**

***Survey Reliability Test***

| Construct Pair | HTMT  | Pass/Fail |
|----------------|-------|-----------|
| DBA and AO     | 0.624 | Pass      |
| DBA and GO     | 0.459 | Pass      |
| DBA and LO     | 0.567 | Pass      |
| GO and AO      | 0.673 | Pass      |
| LO and AO      | 0.817 | Pass      |
| LO and GO      | 0.698 | Pass      |

The assessment of model fit was conducted using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), d\_ULS, and d\_G indices obtained through bootstrapping in SmartPLS. The SRMR value for the estimated model was 0.096, slightly exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.08, suggesting a marginally acceptable fit. While this value indicates some room for improvement, it remains within an interpretable range for structural equation modeling.

The d\_ULS (Unweighted Least Squares Discrepancy) value was 6.534, and the d\_G (Geodesic Discrepancy) was 2.257, both exceeding ideal thresholds. These indices suggest that there is a measurable discrepancy between the observed and predicted covariance matrices, but given the theoretical soundness of the model, it was retained for further analysis.

Despite these findings, the model demonstrates a reasonable degree of fit, allowing for the continuation of hypothesis testing and interpretation of path relationships. Given the strong factor loadings and construct validity, no modifications were made to the model.

The structural model was evaluated using path coefficients, coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), and effect size ( $f^2$ ) to determine the relationships between the latent constructs and the predictive power of the model.

#### Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Path coefficients indicate the strength and direction of the relationships between independent and dependent variables. The path from Activity Orientation to DBA Motivation was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.430$ ,  $t = 3.597$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting a strong positive relationship. However, the paths from Goal Orientation to DBA Motivation ( $\beta = 0.061$ ,  $t = 0.652$ ,  $p = 0.515$ ) and Learning Orientation to DBA Motivation ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $t = 1.565$ ,  $p = 0.118$ ) were not statistically significant. These findings indicate that while Activity Orientation has a meaningful impact on DBA Motivation, the other two constructs do not demonstrate a statistically significant influence.



The  $R^2$  value measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. The  $R^2$  for DBA Motivation was 0.414, indicating that 41.4% of the variance in DBA Motivation is explained by Activity Orientation, Goal Orientation, and Learning Orientation combined. This suggests a moderate explanatory power of the model.

Effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) help determine the individual impact of each predictor on the dependent variable. The results showed that Activity Orientation had a moderate effect on DBA Motivation ( $f^2 = 0.135$ ), whereas Goal Orientation ( $f^2 = 0.004$ ) and Learning Orientation ( $f^2 = 0.032$ ) exhibited negligible effects. These results reinforce that Activity Orientation is the strongest predictor of DBA Motivation in this model.

These findings provide key insights into the drivers of DBA Motivation, highlighting the dominant role of Activity Orientation. Future research may explore modifications to the model or additional mediating variables to strengthen the predictive capability of Goal and Learning Orientations.

Bootstrapping was conducted in SmartPLS to assess the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships between constructs. The results, including path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), standard errors, t-values, and p-values, provide insights into the strength and significance of each relationship.

The Activity Orientation  $\rightarrow$  DBA Motivation path demonstrated a significant positive effect ( $\beta = 0.430$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that individuals with higher activity-oriented motivations are more likely to pursue a DBA degree. The t-value of 3.597 further supports the robustness of this relationship.

Conversely, the relationships Goal Orientation  $\rightarrow$  DBA Motivation ( $\beta = 0.061$ ,  $p = 0.515$ ) and Learning Orientation  $\rightarrow$  DBA Motivation ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $p = 0.118$ ) were found to be non-significant. These results suggest that while goal-oriented and learning-oriented motivations may play a role in shaping DBA pursuit, they do not exhibit a statistically significant direct effect in this model.

The findings reinforce the importance of activity-oriented motivations, such as professional engagement and networking, in influencing DBA enrollment decisions. However, future research may explore potential moderating variables or indirect pathways to assess the roles of goal and learning orientations.

### **Hypothesis Testing Results**

The structural model analysis examined the relationships between goal orientation, learning orientation, and activity orientation with DBA motivation. Path coefficients, statistical significance, and effect sizes ( $f^2$ ) were assessed to determine the strength of each hypothesized relationship.

**Hypothesis 1:** The relationship between goal orientation and DBA motivation was tested. The results showed that goal orientation was not a significant predictor of DBA motivation ( $\beta = 0.061$ ,  $p = 0.515$ ), failing to support Hypothesis 1. Given this non-significant finding, subfactor analysis was conducted to explore whether specific goal-oriented subcomponents, such as favorable U.S. residency status (H1a) and career development (H1b), demonstrated stronger relationships.

**Hypothesis 2:** Learning orientation was also tested as a predictor of DBA motivation. Results indicated that learning orientation did not significantly influence DBA motivation ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $p = 0.118$ ), meaning Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Subfactor analysis was then used to investigate whether the individual components of learning orientation, including cultural capital (H2a) and symbolic capital (H2b), had a stronger influence on DBA motivation.

**Hypothesis 3:** Activity orientation was found to be a significant predictor of DBA motivation ( $\beta = 0.430$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), providing strong support for Hypothesis 3. The effect size ( $f^2 = 0.135$ ) indicated a moderate impact. Given this result, further examination of activity orientation subfactors was conducted to determine whether social integration (H3a), English language proficiency (H3b), and familial/cultural advice (H3c) were driving this relationship.

The  $R^2$  value for DBA motivation was 0.414, indicating that approximately 41.4% of the variance in DBA motivation was explained by the three independent variables. However, given the lack of significant relationships for goal and learning orientation, subfactor analysis was pursued to refine the understanding of these constructs and their potential indirect effects.

Since Hypothesis 3 was supported but Hypotheses 1 and 2 were not, subfactor analysis will be performed to assess whether more granular dimensions of goal orientation and learning orientation exhibit significant effects. This will provide a more nuanced understanding of what specific motivational drivers influence DBA pursuit.

To further understand the underlying dimensions influencing DBA Motivation, a subfactor analysis was conducted to examine the individual contributions of the latent constructs. The model tested included the following subfactors: Cultural Capital (CC), Career Development (CD), Familial Advice (FA), Favorable Status (FS), Language Proficiency (LP), Symbolic Capital (SC), and Social Integration (SI). The results provided insights into the specific pathways that significantly influenced DBA Motivation.

The path analysis revealed varying levels of influence among the subfactors. Familial Advice (FA) ( $\beta = 0.308$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) and Symbolic Capital (SC) ( $\beta = 0.335$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ) demonstrated statistically significant relationships with DBA Motivation, indicating that both familial and symbolic factors play important roles in influencing a student's decision to pursue a DBA. Conversely, Career Development (CD) ( $\beta = -0.180$ ,  $p = 0.074$ ), Cultural Capital (CC) ( $\beta = -0.073$ ,  $p = 0.370$ ), Favorable Status (FS) ( $\beta = 0.120$ ,  $p = 0.160$ ), Language Proficiency (LP) ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $p = 0.218$ ), and Social Integration (SI) ( $\beta = 0.086$ ,  $p = 0.422$ ) did not exhibit statistically significant relationships with DBA Motivation.

The effect size analysis further reinforced the impact of Familial Advice ( $f^2 = 0.079$ ) and Symbolic Capital ( $f^2 = 0.089$ ), both of which demonstrated moderate explanatory power. Other subfactors, such as Career Development ( $f^2 = 0.032$ ), Cultural Capital ( $f^2 = 0.006$ ), Favorable Status ( $f^2 = 0.017$ ), Language Proficiency ( $f^2 = 0.020$ ), and Social Integration ( $f^2 = 0.008$ ), showed negligible effect sizes, suggesting a weaker role in influencing DBA Motivation.

## INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

These findings indicate that prospective students' motivations to pursue a DBA from an American institution are strongly influenced by familial encouragement and the perceived symbolic value of the degree. While career-related aspirations and financial considerations may be important to students, they do not emerge as statistically significant predictors in this study. Similarly, cultural capital, language proficiency, and social integration do not exhibit substantial explanatory power, suggesting that these factors may play secondary roles in decision-making processes.

Overall, the subfactor analysis underscores the importance of familial and symbolic influences in shaping DBA motivations. Future research may further investigate these relationships in different populations to assess the generalizability of these findings.

### **Subfactor Analysis and Hypothesis Evaluation**

The subfactor analysis was conducted to further examine the relationships between Goal Orientation, Learning Orientation, and Activity Orientation with DBA Motivation. This deeper analysis allowed for a more granular assessment of the underlying constructs and their influence on individuals' motivation to pursue an American DBA. The subfactors were mapped to their respective higher-order constructs and evaluated against the hypotheses.

Goal Orientation was hypothesized to positively influence DBA Motivation (H1), with two subcomponents: Favorable United States Residency Status (H1a), Career Development (H1b)

The results indicate that neither Goal Orientation as a whole ( $\beta = 0.061$ ,  $p = 0.515$ ) nor its subfactors produced statistically significant effects on DBA Motivation. Specifically, Symbolic Capital (SC), representing an institution's reputation and status, showed a positive and significant relationship with DBA Motivation ( $\beta = 0.335$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ), partially supporting H1b. However, Cultural Capital (CC) and Career Development (CD) were not significant, failing to support H1a and part of H1b.

Learning Orientation was hypothesized to positively influence DBA Motivation (H2), with two subcomponents: Desire for Cultural Capital (H2a), Institutional Symbolic Capital (H2b)

The main construct of Learning Orientation was not significantly related to DBA Motivation ( $\beta = 0.212$ ,  $p = 0.118$ ), failing to support H2. When analyzing its subfactors, Cultural Capital (CC) ( $\beta = -0.073$ ,  $p = 0.370$ ) and Career Development (CD) ( $\beta = -0.180$ ,  $p = 0.074$ ) also failed to reach statistical significance, indicating that these motivations were not driving factors for DBA enrollment. However, the marginal significance of CD suggests a potential indirect influence worth exploring in future research.

Activity Orientation was hypothesized to positively influence DBA Motivation (H3), with three subcomponents: Social Integration (H3a), English Language Proficiency (H3b), Familial and Cultural Advice (H3c)

Activity Orientation was the only higher-order construct to show a significant positive effect on DBA Motivation ( $\beta = 0.430$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), providing full support for H3. Examining subfactors, Familial Advice (FA) ( $\beta = 0.308$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) and Symbolic Capital (SC) ( $\beta = 0.335$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ) were both positively significant, supporting H3c and

reinforcing the role of institutional prestige in DBA enrollment decisions. However, Social Integration (SI) ( $\beta = 0.086$ ,  $p = 0.422$ ) and English Language Proficiency (LP) ( $\beta = 0.142$ ,  $p = 0.218$ ) were not statistically significant, failing to support H3a and H3b. These results suggest that familial influences and the perception of institutional reputation play a more critical role than language skills or broader social integration.

**Table 10**

***Hypothesis Results***

| Hypothesis | Path                                   | P Value      | Beta ( $\beta$ ) | Supported  |
|------------|--|--------------|------------------|------------|
| H1         | GO $\rightarrow$ DBA                   | 0.515        | 0.061            | No         |
| H1a        | FS $\rightarrow$ DBA                   | 0.370        | -0.073           | No         |
| H1b        | CD $\rightarrow$ DBA                   | 0.074        | -0.180           | No         |
| H2         | LO $\rightarrow$ DBA                   | 0.118        | 0.212            | No         |
| H2a        | CC $\rightarrow$ DBA                   | 0.370        | -0.073           | No         |
| <b>H2b</b> | <b>SC <math>\rightarrow</math> DBA</b> | <b>0.010</b> | <b>0.335</b>     | <b>Yes</b> |
| <b>H3</b>  | <b>AO <math>\rightarrow</math> DBA</b> | <b>0.000</b> | <b>0.430</b>     | <b>Yes</b> |
| H3a        | SI $\rightarrow$ DBA                   | 0.422        | 0.086            | No         |
| H3b        | LP $\rightarrow$ DBA                   | 0.218        | 0.142            | No         |
| <b>H3c</b> | <b>FA <math>\rightarrow</math> DBA</b> | <b>0.004</b> | <b>0.308</b>     | <b>Yes</b> |

These findings provide nuanced insights into the factors influencing DBA enrollment among Latin American students. The strongest drivers were familial advice (H3c) and symbolic capital (H2b), both suggesting that perceived institutional prestige and family support play crucial roles in the decision-making process. On the other hand, motivations related to career advancement, residency status, language acquisition, and social integration did not yield statistically significant results.

This analysis provides valuable direction for further research and implications for universities seeking to attract Latin American students to their DBA programs. Future studies may explore potential moderating variables, such as financial constraints or institutional marketing efforts, to deepen the understanding of these motivational drivers.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

This study examined the motivations driving Latin American students to pursue a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from American institutions. Given the increasing globalization of higher education and the growing presence of Latin American professionals in advanced business programs, understanding the underlying factors that shape these students' decisions is essential for academic institutions, policymakers, and corporate stakeholders. The research employed structural equation modeling (SEM) using SPSS to analyze how various motivational constructs—goal orientation, learning orientation, and activity orientation—influence DBA enrollment decisions. By assessing the relative importance of these factors, the study aimed to uncover key determinants that drive students toward this advanced professional degree while also identifying areas for further inquiry.

The findings indicate that activity orientation emerged as the most significant predictor of DBA motivation among Latin American students. This suggests that individuals who prioritize experiential learning, applied knowledge, and hands-on engagement in business problem-solving are more likely to seek a DBA. A crucial component of this finding was the role of symbolic capital, which encompasses factors such as familial guidance, institutional reputation, and perceived social prestige. These



elements significantly influenced students' decisions, highlighting the importance of external validation and recognition in educational choices. In contrast, goal orientation and learning orientation, traditionally associated with academic and professional aspirations, did not exhibit statistically significant relationships with DBA motivation. This challenges conventional assumptions that career progression, U.S. residency aspirations, and cultural integration serve as the primary motivators for Latin American students pursuing advanced degrees abroad.

Further analysis of subfactors provided additional nuance to these findings. While symbolic capital played a decisive role, certain anticipated drivers of DBA enrollment—such as English language proficiency, social integration, and networking opportunities—did not demonstrate meaningful statistical relationships with motivation. This finding suggests that Latin American students may prioritize institutional branding, faculty prestige, and familial encouragement over more conventional predictors of academic mobility. This contrasts with prior research on international student motivations, particularly among European and Asian populations, where professional networking and skill acquisition tend to play more prominent roles. These insights underscore the need for tailored recruitment strategies that recognize the distinct values and decision-making frameworks of Latin American applicants.

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain unaddressed. The study did not directly examine financial considerations, including tuition affordability, scholarships, and return on investment, which are likely to play a critical role in enrollment decisions. Additionally, it remains unclear whether motivations differ between Latin American

students pursuing a DBA versus alternative graduate programs, such as PhDs, MBAs, or executive education courses. The study also did not explore the influence of employer sponsorship, corporate funding, or tuition reimbursement, which could significantly alter access to DBA programs and shape enrollment trends. Moreover, while the research treated Latin American students as a unified group, significant regional differences in educational aspirations and economic constraints likely exist. Future research should investigate how these factors vary across different Latin American countries and economic backgrounds.

Additionally, several limitations should be acknowledged. While the sample size met the necessary threshold for statistical analysis, it may not fully represent the broader Latin American student population seeking DBA degrees. The voluntary nature of participation could have resulted in a sample skewed toward highly motivated individuals, potentially limiting generalizability. Moreover, the study relied on self-reported data, which introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, where respondents may have provided answers that align with perceived societal expectations rather than their true motivations. While the quantitative approach offered empirical validation of the proposed model, incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could provide richer insights into personal motivations, perceived barriers, and decision-making processes.

Based on these findings, future research should explore several key areas. First, the role of moderating variables, such as income level, employer sponsorship, family financial support, and visa sponsorship, should be investigated to determine how they

shape DBA enrollment decisions. A comparative study across DBA, MBA, and PhD programs could reveal whether different degree types attract students with distinct motivational drivers. Further exploration into institutional branding, accreditation status, faculty reputation, and program structure would help clarify how these factors influence student preferences. Additionally, a longitudinal study tracking students before, during, and after their DBA programs would provide valuable insights into whether initial motivations align with post-graduation career trajectories. Finally, a deeper examination of cultural and socioeconomic influences would enhance understanding of how Latin American students perceive the long-term value of a DBA in shaping their professional and personal aspirations.

By addressing these gaps, future research can provide a more comprehensive perspective on the factors influencing DBA enrollment among Latin American students. Institutions can leverage these insights to refine recruitment strategies, improve student support services, and develop programs that better align with the needs and expectations of this growing demographic.

Additionally, this study has provided valuable insights into the motivations driving Latin American students to pursue a DBA from U.S. institutions, yet even more significant areas remain open for further exploration. As DBA programs continue to expand globally, future research should examine how these degrees are evolving to meet the needs of diverse student populations and industry demands. Several promising avenues for inquiry emerge from this study's findings, each of which has the potential to

inform institutional decision-making, recruitment strategies, and the broader positioning of DBA programs in both academic and corporate landscapes.

First, how the role of DBA degrees in bridging the gap between business and academia warrants deeper investigation. Unlike traditional PhD programs, DBAs emphasize applied research and executive leadership, making them uniquely positioned to address real-world business challenges. Future studies could explore how DBA graduates integrate research-based insights into industry practices and whether this contributes to measurable business innovation, leadership effectiveness, and economic impact. Comparative analyses between DBA and PhD pathways could further illuminate how these degrees serve distinct professional audiences and what factors influence student decision-making.

Second, the globalization of DBA programs presents opportunities for further study. While this research focused on Latin American students, future inquiries could explore how non-U.S. students, particularly from Europe, Asia, and Africa, perceive the value of a DBA relative to other advanced business degrees. Investigating the decision-making frameworks of international students considering factors such as accreditation, institutional reputation, faculty expertise, and cross-border career opportunities, could help universities tailor programs to a broader audience. Additionally, research into the rising demand for DBAs in emerging markets could highlight the degree's potential as a catalyst for regional business development.

Third, this study underscores the importance of symbolic capital in influencing student motivations, yet further research is needed to assess how factors such as

institutional branding, faculty prestige, and corporate partnerships shape enrollment decisions. Understanding how universities can leverage these elements to enhance program attractiveness particularly among international and executive-level students—would provide practical insights for business schools looking to expand their global reach. Additionally, an exploration of how schools can use DBA related research to create standardized frameworks, checklists, or marketing strategies could yield practical applications for both academic institutions and corporate sponsors.

Another promising area of inquiry involves the role of employer and government sponsorship in DBA program accessibility. While this study did not examine financial factors in depth, future research could investigate how tuition reimbursement policies, corporate sponsorship programs, and government-backed scholarships impact student enrollment. Examining the return on investment (ROI) of a DBA compared to other executive education pathways could further clarify its long-term value proposition for professionals and organizations alike.

Finally, research into the impact of DBA holders on international business relations, particularly in Latin America, could provide valuable insights into how these degrees contribute to economic and trade partnerships. Investigating whether DBA graduates foster stronger U.S.-Latin America business ties, influence policy discussions, or drive cross-border collaborations could further position the DBA as a strategic tool for global business leadership. Expanding this analysis to other regions could reveal broader patterns in how advanced business education facilitates international economic cooperation.

By addressing these research gaps, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the DBA degree's role in shaping global business leadership. Academic institutions, policymakers, and corporate stakeholders can leverage these insights to refine program offerings, enhance recruitment strategies, and develop initiatives that align with the evolving demands of both students and the business world.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides critical insights into the motivations driving Latin American students to pursue a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in the United States. The findings reveal that activity-based motivations—particularly familial support and institutional prestige—serve as dominant influences in their decision-making process. Contrary to common assumptions, factors such as career progression, cultural integration, and professional networking appear to play a less significant role in shaping DBA enrollment choices. These results challenge conventional perspectives that emphasize economic mobility and international career opportunities as primary motivators for Latin American students seeking advanced degrees abroad.

A key contribution of this study is its identification of critical gaps in the literature related to DBA enrollment among Latin American students. Notably, financial constraints, employer sponsorship, and regional differences in motivations remain underexplored. Given the high costs associated with DBA programs, tuition affordability, access to scholarships, and anticipated return on investment likely play a more significant role than previously recognized. However, these economic factors were not the primary focus of this study and warrant further examination. Similarly, the extent to which

corporate funding, tuition reimbursement, or employer incentives impact enrollment decisions remains unclear. While some students may self-fund their education, others may depend on financial backing from their employers, government scholarships, or private sponsorships as factors that could significantly alter program accessibility and perceived value.

Another notable insight is the heterogeneity of Latin American students as a demographic group. While this study treated them as a unified cohort, substantial regional differences likely exist in terms of economic conditions, educational aspirations, and cultural perceptions of a DBA's value. Students from different Latin American countries may face distinct barriers, such as visa restrictions, currency exchange fluctuations, and varying levels of corporate investment in executive education. A deeper exploration of country-specific motivations and constraints would provide greater granularity in understanding the decision-making processes of Latin American DBA candidates.

The study also presents important implications for academic institutions seeking to attract and support Latin American DBA students. By recognizing the dominance of symbolic capital—familial influence and institutional reputation—universities can refine their recruitment strategies to emphasize factors that resonate most strongly with this demographic. Marketing campaigns that highlight faculty expertise, program accreditation, and alumni success stories may be more effective than those focusing solely on career advancement opportunities. Furthermore, institutions could benefit from developing personalized engagement efforts targeting prospective students' families and

professional networks, as these external influences appear to play a significant role in shaping enrollment decisions.

From a policy and institutional perspective, understanding financial barriers is essential to making DBA programs more accessible. Universities could explore scholarship opportunities, flexible payment plans, or employer partnership models that reduce financial strain on prospective students. Additionally, expanding mentorship programs and networking initiatives tailored specifically for Latin American DBA candidates could help address gaps in professional development and integration within U.S. academic and business environments.

While this study provides a strong empirical foundation, several avenues for future research should be pursued. Examining financial constraints and employer sponsorship would provide greater clarity on how tuition costs, financial aid options, and corporate funding models influence Latin American students' ability to pursue a DBA. A deeper look into regional differences in motivation would help determine whether motivations vary significantly across Latin American nations and economic backgrounds. Longitudinal research following students throughout their academic journey and into their post-graduation careers could assess whether initial motivations align with long-term professional outcomes. Qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could provide richer insight into personal narratives, perceived barriers, and decision-making processes. Comparative studies across graduate programs would further clarify whether motivations for a DBA differ from those for an MBA, PhD, or executive



education, shedding light on degree selection patterns among Latin American professionals.

By expanding the scope of research in these areas, scholars and institutions can develop a more comprehensive understanding of what drives Latin American students toward DBA programs. This, in turn, can inform policy improvements, recruitment strategies, and institutional support systems designed to foster a more inclusive and effective higher education landscape for international doctoral students.

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## APPENDIX

### Survey Instrument

|     | Code  | Indicator   |
|-----|-------|---|
| GO  | FS    | Favorable US Residency Status (FS) (Derived for this Study)   |
|     | FS1   | It is important for me to pursue US citizenship?  |
|     | FS2   | I see US citizenship as a way to improve my living standards.   |
|     | FS3   | The benefits of US citizenship are clear and attractive to me.  |
|     | FS4   | I am actively seeking information on how to become a US citizen.                                      |
|     | FS5   | US citizenship would significantly impact my sense of security and stability.                         |
|     | FS6   | I plan to apply for US citizenship as soon as I am eligible.  |
|     | FS7   | Obtaining US citizenship is a priority for my future.   |
| GO  | CD    | Career Development (CD) (Tso et al., 2010)  |
|     | CD1   | I often search for information about job markets and opportunities in the US.                         |
|     | CD2   | It is important to try and secure a job in the US?  |
|     | CD3   | I believe the US offers better job opportunities compared to my home country.                         |
|     | CD4   | The potential for career advancement is greater in the US than in my home country.                    |
|     | CD5   | I am preparing myself to be competitive in the US job market.   |
|     | CD6   | Getting an education in the US is a strategy I use for job searching.                                 |
|     | CD7   | Access to better job opportunities is a key reason for my current educational endeavors.              |
| LO  | SC    | Symbolic Capital (SC) (Derived for this study)  |
|     | SC1   | I chose my US school based on its ranking and reputation in my field of study.                        |
|     | SC2   | The reputation of US schools was important in my decision to study here?                              |
|     | SC3   | I prefer US schools because of their recognized excellence worldwide.                                 |
|     | SC4   | The quality of education at US schools justifies the cost of education here.                          |
|     | SC5   | I often recommend US schools to peers based on their reputation.                                      |
|     | SC6   | The reputation of my school adds value to my degree.  |
|     | SC7   | The reputation of schools in your home country have a lower rating.                                   |
|     | SC8   | The perceived quality of education at home is lower when compared to US schools.                      |
|     | SC9   | The reputation of schools in my home country influenced my decision to study in the US.               |
|     | SC10  | I chose to study in the US due to limitations in the quality of education available at home.          |
|     | SC11  | If the reputation of schools at home were higher, I might have chosen to stay.                        |
|     | SC12  | I believe that schools in my home country are improving in reputation.                                |
|     | SC13  | The global recognition of my home country's schools is important to me.                               |
|     | SC14  | The reputation of US schools was a major factor in my decision to study abroad.                       |
| LO  | CC    | Cultural Capital (CC) (Colvin et al., 2014)   |
|     | CC1   | I actively seek out opportunities to interact with people from different cultures.                    |
|     | CC2   | It is important to you to be part of a diverse cultural community.                                    |
|     | CC3   | Engaging with diverse cultures helps me understand global perspectives better.                        |
|     | CC4   | I value educational settings that offer cultural diversity.   |
|     | CC5   | I believe that experiencing cultural diversity prepares me for global challenges.                     |
|     | CC6   | My experiences with cultural diversity have impacted my personal growth.                              |
|     | CC7   | Experiencing cultural diversity is a key reason for studying in the US.                               |
| AO  | SI    | Social Integration (SI) (Wakefield & Dismore, 2015)   |
|     | SI1   | I actively seek opportunities to meet professionals from around the world.                            |
|     | SI2   | Global networking is important to me and my professional success?                                     |
|     | SI3   | I use social media and professional platforms to connect with international peers.                    |
|     | SI4   | Attending international conferences is a priority for me.   |
|     | SI5   | I believe that global networking opens up more professional opportunities.                            |
|     | SI6   | Networking with individuals from different countries has broadened my professional outlook.           |
|     | SI7   | Networking globally is essential for my career development.   |
| AO  | LP    | Language Proficiency (LP) (English) (Andrade, 2006; Li et al., 2017)                                  |
|     | LP1   | I believe that studying in the U.S. will significantly enhance my English language skills.            |
|     | LP2   | Proficiency in English is crucial for my academic and professional success.                           |
|     | LP3   | I actively seek opportunities to practice and improve my English.                                     |
|     | LP4   | I feel that advanced English skills will open up better career opportunities for me.                  |
|     | LP5   | My goal is to achieve fluency in English to compete effectively in the global job market.             |
|     | LP6   | I am confident that studying in an English-speaking environment will improve my language proficiency. |
|     | LP7   | Improving my English proficiency is a key reason for pursuing a DBA in the U.S.                       |
| AO  | FA    | Familial Advice (FA) (Dichos) (Luedke, 2020; Sánchez et al., 2010)                                    |
|     | FA1   | The sayings and wisdom passed down in my family motivate me to achieve higher education.              |
|     | FA2   | My decision to study in the U.S. is strongly supported by my family's encouragement.                  |
|     | FA3   | Cultural advice from my family plays a crucial role in my educational and career choices.             |
|     | FA4   | Following my family's guidance, I am determined to pursue advanced education abroad.                  |
|     | FA5   | My family's belief in the value of education motivates me to pursue a DBA in the U.S.                 |
|     | FA6   | The proverbs and sayings from my culture inspire me to seek higher education and personal growth.     |
|     | FA7   | My family's advice significantly influences my decision to pursue a DBA.                              |
| DBA | DBA   | Motivation to Pursue a DBA at a US University (Derived for this Study)                                |
|     | DBA1  | I am highly motivated to pursue a DBA degree.   |
|     | DBA2  | I am committed to enrolling in a DBA program.   |
|     | DBA3  | I have a strong interest in obtaining a DBA degree.   |
|     | DBA4  | I am determined to achieve a DBA degree.  |
|     | DBA5  | I am willing to invest the necessary time and effort to complete a DBA program.                       |
|     | DBA6  | Earning a DBA is important to me.   |
|     | DBA7  | I aspire to earn a DBA degree.  |
|     | DBA8  | I prioritize obtaining a DBA degree among my educational goals.                                       |
|     | DBA9  | I feel ready to start a DBA program.  |
|     | DBA10 | I am enthusiastic about the prospect of pursuing a DBA degree.  |

Each of these questions will be scaled (1-7 where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" and 7 is "Strongly Agree") to quantify the responses for better analysis and comparison.

## VITA

MATTHEW A. THOMPSON

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1996-2000 | B.S., Chemistry<br>University of Oklahoma<br>Norman, Oklahoma   |
| 2006-2009 | M.S. Information Technology<br>University of Maryland University College<br>Adelphi, Maryland                   |
| 2017-2018 | M.B.A. Business Administration<br>Strayer University<br>Jack Welch Management Institute<br>Herndon, Virginia    |
| 2022-2025 | Doctoral Candidate<br>Florida International University<br>Chapman Graduate School of Business<br>Miami, Florida |
| 2023-2025 | Adjunct Professor<br>Project/Operations Management<br>Southern New Hampshire University                         |
| 2025-2026 | Student and Alumni Board Member<br>Strayer University<br>Jack Welch Management Institute<br>Herndon, Virginia   |
| 2025-2026 | Women in Leadership Board Member<br>University of Oklahoma<br>Norman, Oklahoma                                  |