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Los Angeles

Sus Voces: Latina High School Principals

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Violeta M. Ruiz

2021

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2021

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sus Voces: Latina High School Principals

by

Violeta M. Ruiz

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Diane Durkin, Co-Chair

Professor Robert Cooper, Co-Chair

This qualitative study examined the experiences of Latina high school principals in their roles as high school principals in a predominantly White and male role. United States demographics show that the Latino/a population is growing, and as a result, the Latino/a student population has also flourished (NCES, 2016). However, Latino/a students continue to underperform academically and rarely attend schools with Latino/a Leaders (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2015; NCES, 2016). Using Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), Community Cultural Wealth, and Latina Feminist Epistemology, this study explored how Latina high school principals embed aspects of Community Cultural Wealth into their practice, as well as common barriers encountered in their roles. Last, it investigated how current Latina high school principals say they provided aspiring Latina high school principals with career advice. Specifically, this study examined individual stories of the

14 Latina high school principals, using *platicas* (unstructured interviews) to allow participants to share their experiences, knowledge, memories and advice (Delgado-Bernal, 2020).

Findings were organized around three research questions: (a) In what ways, if any, do Latina public high school principals incorporate community cultural wealth into their practice? (b) What barriers and supports do Latina public high school principals say they encountered in their leadership roles? And (c) What advice do Latina high school principals have for aspiring Latina principals? The findings of the study highlighted the use of navigational capital by the participants and brought their own lived navigational experiences to bear on their leadership choices. In addition, the study revealed that the participants used their race, linguistic capital, and aspirational capital to develop and deepen their relationships with their students. The Latina high school principals in this study echo aspects of resistant capital as they advise aspiring Latina high school principals to fully know, understand, and communicate their “why” to their school community. The participants attributed their success to their social capital and encouraged aspiring Latina principals to identify mentors and become members of professional networks. Findings further advise that aspiring Latina high school principals prioritize familial capital and a balance between their personal and principal role.

The dissertation of Violeta M. Ruiz is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Anacelia and Jose Ruiz. My parents provided me with the support, encouragement, and desire to complete this dissertation. Both my parents came to the United States without speaking the language; however, they ensured that I had the necessary resources needed to excel academically. My mother worked at my elementary school and made sure that I was placed with the right teachers. My father worked two full time jobs to provide for us (my brother, mother, and myself) growing up. This degree is the fruit of their love and work. Yes, we could!

Le dedico esta tesis a mis padres- Anacelia y José Ruiz. Mis padres me proveyeron el apoyo, motivación, y ganas de terminar este proyecto. Ellos llegaron a los Estados Unidos sin hablar inglés. Sin embargo, ellos se encargaron de darme los recursos necesarios para sobresalir académicamente. Mi madre trabajo en mi escuela primaria y se aseguró que yo tuviera los mejores maestros. Mi padre trabajó dos trabajos de tiempo completo para poder proveer para nosotros. Este doctorado es fruto del amor y labor de mis padres. Si Se Pudo!

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I would also like to thank my friends, colleagues, teachers, and supervisors who cheered me on throughout this process. Your words, actions, late night texts, and calls that turned into 5 am check-ins really kept me grounded throughout the past three years.

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VITA

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study sought to provide Latina high school principals with a platform to share their personal and professional *testimonios*. Specifically, this study attempted to identify the forms in which Latina high school principals incorporate Community Cultural Wealth into their practice, the barriers encountered in their roles and the resources used to address them, and last, the participants shared advice for aspiring Latina high school principals. The study used Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory, Chicana Feminist Epistemology, and Cultural Intuition methodologies to collect and analyze the participants' *testimonios*.

Summary of the Problem

Latino/a students benefit from a Latino/a principal because such leaders understand and support students' cultural backgrounds, Latina principals focus on culturally responsible leadership for social justice, by using their familial capital of their own personal educational backgrounds to better understand the communities that they serve (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Rodela et al., 2019; Yosso, 2005). Latino/a principals understanding of both cultures (Latino/a and American) facilitate their social justice implementation as they work to narrow the achievement gap, cross language barriers with students and the community, incorporate their understanding of diversity into curriculum and instruction, and serve as role models for Latino/a students, families and teachers (Lopez, 2018; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Montaña, 2016; Perez, 2016). Nonetheless, Latino students rarely attend schools with Latino/a Leaders, with only 8.2% of school principals being Latino/a (NCES, 2016) even though the Latino/a population in the United States continues to grow and as a result, currently make up approximately 22.7% of the student population (NCES, 2016).

The lack of Latina principal representation is an issue of equality, diversity, and equity for aspiring Latina leaders. This problem surfaces when the percentage of Latina principals remains stagnant while the majority of principal positions continue to be held by white females while Latina educators with administrative credentials continue to hold non-administrative positions (Lopez, 2018; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Montaña, 2016).

Challenges Latina high school principals identify in their promotion include limited recruitment, increased focus on elementary curriculum, and spending more years teaching in the classroom than their male counterparts (Martinez et al., 2016; Mendez-Morse, 2004). They are also less likely (approximately 20% of Latinas) to have formal mentoring relationships and instead, create informal mentorship relationships by creating an amalgamation of characteristics from various individuals (Carr, 1995; Mendez-Morse, 2004; Mendez-Morse et al, 2015; Ortiz, 1982).

Aspiring administrators usually gain entry into the principal profession through the encouragement and mentoring by current school leaders in what is traditionally known as the “good ole boy network” (Gardiner et al., 2000). Such networks exclude promoting women and Latinas (Gardiner et al., 2000; Quintalan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004; Martinez et al., 2016). In the “good ole boy network,” an older White man typically mentors a younger version of himself who will maintain the status quo by exhibiting similar leadership styles.

In addition to the “good ole boy network,” women face the societal construct that men are considered to exemplify good leadership because they are “stronger” candidates than women (Coleman, 2003; Gill & Arnold, 2015; Skrla, 1999). Historically, school leadership has been associated with what society views as masculine traits—problem-solving, confidence, and competitiveness (Skrla, 1999). Thus, by linking school leadership to masculinity, female

applicants are placed at a disadvantage due to not being perceived as natural leaders (Quintalan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). A more equitable system needs to be in place to ensure fairness in the hiring process (Gardiner et al., 2000; Quintalan & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). Like their White counterparts, Latina principals tackle society's perceived manliness of the leadership role (Martinez et al., 2016) in addition to their own cultural norms and expectations (Martinez et al., 2016; Santiago, 2009).

While schools lack a representation of Latino/a principals generally, they have a dearth of Latina principals, a figure so small that it is not disaggregated by school level. This lack of representation of Latinos/as generally leads to schools being run by principals who may lack the cultural connection to their students. It results in less nurturing and caring characteristics that promote students to succeed academically (Falk, 2011). Often, Latino/a principals recognize that certain attitudes demonstrated by Latino/a students, such as defiant, disruptive, and apathetic attitudes, reflect negative experiences encountered with previous educators. Principals with such understanding can enact policies that avoid antagonizing and marginalizing these students. Further, they can promote inclusive school environments, such as implementing culturally responsive practices both inside and outside of the classroom, and equitable outcomes (Mendez-Morse, 2013; Rodela et al., 2019).

Further, Latina principals in particular are more likely to identify with the culture and background of Latino/a students, be familiar with the parents' values, and employ linguistic capital; Latina principals are more likely to speak the home language, which allows them to create a bridge between families and schools to work together towards the students' academic progress (Espinoza & Herold, 2003; Falk, 2011; Lopez, 2018; Niño et al., 2017).

Beyond cultural disconnection, the lack of Latina principal representation undermines equality, diversity, and equity for aspiring Latina leaders. The percentage of Latina principals has remained stagnant while the majority of principal positions continue to be held by White females (except in high school and superintendent roles); further, Latina educators with administrative credentials continue to hold non-administrative positions (Lopez, 2018; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Montaña, 2016).

This qualitative study addresses this problem by providing current Latina high school principals with a venue to share their *testimonios* in an effort to equip aspiring Latina leaders with effective strategies to become successful principals. *Testimonios* are personal narratives from individuals who speak about their personal experiences with marginalization, exploitation, and/or poverty (Beverly, 2008). In this study, the *testimonios* serve to center the voices of the Latina high school participants that reveal their common and at times, unique experiences and challenges as leaders. This study incorporated Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Cultural Intuition (Delgado Bernal, 1998) during data collection and analysis as the researcher is also a Latina high school principal and can be viewed as an ally to the participants. This study allowed the participants to describe how they implement various forms of capital from Community Cultural Wealth which highlights the forms strengths and resources that people of color, in this case, Latina principals, bring into their practice. The study asked participants to identify and detail barriers encountered in their roles such as family and home obligations, discrimination, inadequate preparation, biased hiring practices, and potential hostile work environments as well as identify the skills needed to address them. These barriers are aligned to both Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory, which will be detailed further. In addition to the challenges, this study asked the participants to identify skills and resources used to address the

challenges, such as a peer support group, a principal support group, mentors, readings, and other academic preparation.

The Study

This qualitative study interviewed 14 current Latina high school principals. The purpose of the *platicas* were threefold. First, they identified how the participants implement Community Cultural Wealth through their use of social, familial, linguistic, aspirational, navigational, and resistance capital to enhance their practice. Second, the interviews highlighted the barriers encountered by Latina principals and supports needed to address them. Last, the participants provided aspiring Latina high school principals with advice as they navigate the principal role.

Research Questions

In this study, I asked the following research questions:

- 1) In what ways, if any, do Latina public high school principals incorporate *Community Cultural Wealth* into their practice?
- 2) What barriers and supports do Latina public high school principals say they encountered in their leadership roles?
- 3) What advice do Latina high school principals have for aspiring Latina principals?

Research Design and Methods

A qualitative study is the appropriate design for this project due to the nature of the research questions which explore the meaning that lived experiences attributed to Latina high school principals (Cresswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research seeks to find understanding in the interpretation and meaning of people's experiences, whereas quantitative research systematically uses facts, like numerical values, to describe a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study did not focus on numerical values, instead it focused on discovering

the way Latina high school principals make sense of their personal, educational, and professional experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To study the research questions, I conducted a qualitative study where I interviewed 14 current Latina high school principals, 13 principals from Southern California and one from Texas. The study used Chicana Feminist Epistemology design, specifically Cultural Intuition, to connect with the participants in an organic fashion through unstructured *platicas* (interviews) and to code and analyze the participant *testimonios*. In this study, *testimonios* are used as “a pedagogical, methodological, and activist approach to social justice” in an intentional and political fashion incite collective action (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The *testimonios* presented in this study are counterstories because they highlight the experiences using the words of the Latina high school principals as they focus on the public educational institutions that failed them (Trevino et al., 2008). The purpose of the qualitative approach not only allowed current Latina high school principals with an opportunity to share their *testimonios* but also to provided aspiring Latina principals with examples of successful strategies on how to address barriers they might encounter in the principal role. Each participant participated in two *platicas*. The *platicas* specifically addressed the ways they implement community cultural wealth into their practice, personal challenges faced by Latina principals, their supports on addressing the challenges of the principal role, and advice for aspiring Latina high school principals.

Data Analysis

This qualitative study is grounded on Community Cultural Wealth, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), and Chicana Feminist Epistemology. The first research question specifically focuses on aspects of Community Cultural Wealth and this lens

was also used to analyze the findings of the study as I looked for different forms of capital in responses to the other research questions (Yosso, 2005). Critical Race Theory is observed in the *testimonios* of the participants of the study because not only are the participants a population of color but their personal, educational, and professional experiences highlight the presence of racism present in the public education system (Perez-Huber, 2010, Trevino et al., 2008). This study specifically used LatCrit to analyze how the participants, Latina women, made sense of their culture, language, ethnicity, and at times, immigration status (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Chicana Feminist Epistemology is used in this study as both the methodological design and the lens to view the unique educational experiences of the Latina participants specifically based on gender, skin-color, language proficiency, and immigration status (Delgado-Bernal, 1998). Last, I used my Cultural Intuition as I established comradery with the participants during the *platicas* and as I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the findings to make sense of their experiences (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Population and Site Selection

Initially, the study targeted current Latina high school principals who are Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) Alumni from both the University of California, Los Angeles and University of California, Berkeley. Email blasts were sent out to both groups of alumni by each program's directors which yielded three participants from Southern California. To increase the number of participants, the PLI alumni requirement was waived and I began to recruit current Latina high school principals through both a snowball method and by posting recruitment flyers on various professional online social media networks.

Significance

The study is significant because it fills an existing research gap and studies of Latina principals, specifically the educational, personal, and professional experiences of Latina high school principals. Limited research and empirical studies exist on Latina school leaders, with the majority of the studies on Latino school leaders being dissertations (Niño et al., 2017). The study is significant because focuses not only Latina principals but is designed and executed by a Latina high school principal who through the use of Cultural Intuition and LatCrit can highlight the unique experience of Latina high school principals, a demographic that is even less represented in research. This study also identifies barriers present in prominent literature and additional ones specific to Latina high school principals (Martinez et al., 2019; Peterson & Vergara, 2016) and builds on previous studies as it asks the participants to identify the skills and resources needed to address them. Last, this study allows for current Latina high school principals to share advice for aspiring Latina high school principals based on their own lived experiences.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Several key studies have shown that school leadership has one of the greatest impacts on student learning (Leithwood & Janzi, 2008) and a principal's cultural understanding of the community they serve positively impacts academic success (Lopez, 2018; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Montaña, 2016; Perez, 2016). This qualitative study provided current Latina high school principals with the opportunity to share their personal, educational, and professional *testimonios* in an attempt to provide aspiring Latina principals with guidance in addressing the barriers they will encounter in the principal position. This is significant as the demographics in the United States change, yet school leadership demographics remain predominantly unchanged.

This literature review first presents the data on the shifting student demographics and the underrepresentation of Latino/a leaders. It then examines studies on the influence of school leadership on student academic achievement to show their students' potential for learning. The review then analyzes the research that demonstrates that cultural knowledge in leadership improves student outcomes and presents current practices used to increase diversity in school leadership, specifically Latino/a. The literature review then examines the challenges in recruiting and training Latina principals. Last, the review discusses the theoretical framework and rationale for the study.

Background: Latino/a Demographics

The Latino/a population in the United States is rising in the United States, totaling approximately 59.9 million as of July 1, 2018, making them the largest minority population in the United States (U.S. Census, 2018). Latino/as comprise 18.3% of the nation's total population (U.S. Census, 2018). It is predicted that the Latino/a population will continue to grow and that about one-quarter of the U.S. population will be Latino/a by 2015 (NCES, 2011). As of July

2014, Latino/as became the largest ethnic group living in California constituting approximately 15 million Latino/as (U.S. Census, 2014).

As the Latino/a population expands, the Latino/a student population also continues to increase, yet, they continue to academically underperform (NCES, 2019). Approximately 22.7% of all students enrolled in school are Latino/a (Espinoza & Gonzalez, 2017), Latino/a students account for approximately 27% of all public K-12 students (NCES, 2019). In California, Latino/a students comprise 54.5% of K-12 public K-12 students (California Department of Education, 2018). However, nationally, 66% of Latino/a students are graduating from high school as compared to 95% of their White counterparts (The National Urban League, 2015). Only 15% of Latino/a students earn a bachelor's degree as compared to 35% of White students (The National Urban League, 2015).

Despite legal victories advancing opportunities for Latino/as, college degree attainment remains behind. A higher percentage of Latino/a students are graduating high school, yet they are not obtaining college degrees. This means they are not pursuing teaching, a major pipeline into school administration. The National Center for Education Study (NCES) 2015–2016 identified that only 8.2% of principals in the United States are Latino/a. This lack of minorities in educational preparation programs mirrors the educational struggles that racial and ethnic groups have historically endured, such as school segregation based on race (Sanchez et al., 2008). Eight years prior to the end of legal segregation in American public schools, parents in California successfully fought the segregation of 5000 Mexican American students in the *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) case that set a powerful legal precedent to the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) case. Nationally, the *Brown v. Board of Education* ended the overt racial and ethnic segregation which limited educational equity and academic opportunities for people of

color. However, women and minorities continue to face barriers in their pursuit of school administration position.

Latino/a public school educators face systemic barriers that alter career access with respect to the educational administrative positions. The anti-affirmative action passage of Proposition 209 is one political barrier California voters passed during the 1990s, which discouraged using race or ethnicity in employment or school admissions procedures (Ortiz, 2000). The effects of this statute appear in the numbers of Latina principals (CDE, 2014). According to the NCES Schools and Staffing Survey of 2011–2012, only 20.6% of principals in California are Latino/a.

Impacts of School Leadership

Principal leadership has an immense impact on student academic achievement, second only to teachers (Leithwood & Janzi, 2008). Part of this impact is related to the principal's role as an instructional leader. The term instructional leader appeared when school reforms called for change and principals shifted their focus from school operational management to student learning (Parylo et al., 2012). The impact of the principal as an instructional leader can be observed in the instructional program and school culture.

Principals are expected to supply teachers with the necessary resources to support the instructional program (Zepeda, 2013). As instructional leaders, principals support teachers with professional and instructional growth by providing them with the appropriate professional development (Lunenburg, 2013). Principals as instructional leaders then support the teachers' continuous instructional learning by monitoring their instructional practices and participating in cycles of learning with them (Zepeda, 2013).

Effective instructional leadership includes providing teachers not only with the appropriate professional development but also with the needed cultural diversity practices to enhance the instructional program (Grissom et al., 2014; Knoewppel & Rinehart, 2008; Khalifa et al., 2016). Principals play a vital role in recruiting and retaining culturally responsible teachers (Khalifa et al., 2016). They also encourage and model culturally responsive practices both inside and out of the classroom, such as collaboration amongst all stakeholders (Anderson, 2008; Branch et al., 2013; Drago-Severson, 2012; Khalifa et al., 2016).

Successful principals understand the importance of building a collaborative culture amongst staff to increase the school's academic achievement. Collaborative relationships facilitate the standards' alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessments to increase student academic achievement (Lunenburg, 2013, Spillane et al., 2004; Zepeda, 2013). Principals can serve as transformational leaders once they have successfully rooted school environments with strong relationships of trust, vision, goals, and a sense of community (Giles et al., 2005; Leithwood & Janzi, 2006).

Effective principals can increase student academic achievement by establishing a positive school environment by welcoming and supporting teachers and students (Leithwood & Janzi, 2006; Militello et al., 2009; Myung et al., 2010). In a positive school environment, disciplinary issues do not dominate the instructional day, and as a result, a culture focused on academics, safety, and respect is evident (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Grissom et al., 2014; Knoepfel & Rinehart, 2008). This study engaged principals in interviews of how they implement their own community cultural wealth in creating inclusive environments.

Challenges Confronted by Women and Minority Leaders

Despite these critical roles for the instructional leader, including a positive culture, people of color and women continue to face barriers in their pursuit of the principal role. Barriers are defined as social and societal constraints that prevent access to certain individuals from a membership of an existing group (Polczynski, 1990). Women and minorities confront the following barriers in their career journey to school administration: family and home responsibilities, gender role stereotyping, overt discrimination, administrative programs that lack curriculum and materials for both women and students of color, gender discrimination in hiring decisions, unequal salaries, and hostile work environments (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015).

Research indicates that continued barriers such as discrimination may influence or deter current Latina educators from career advancement (Garza et al., 2014; Murakami et al., 2015). As Latina educators pursue principal roles, they confront cultural bias, typecasting, and gender inferiority (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Hibbets, 2005; Magdaleno & Mendoza, 2006; Mendez-Morse, 2004; Trujillo-Ball, 2003). In the process of confronting these biases, Latinas confront issues that sometimes result in their own loss of identity (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Hibbets, 2005; Mendez-Morse, 2004).

This bias is tied to the lack of formal mentoring received by Latina educators. Latina women are less likely (approximately 20% of Latinas) to have formal mentoring relationships and instead, create informal mentoring relationships by cobbling together an amalgamation of characteristics from various individuals (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). This lack of a formal mentor prevents Latinas from entering the principal profession: aspiring administrators usually gain entry into the role through the encouragement and guidance of current leaders in what is traditionally known as the “good ole boy network” (Martinez et al., 2015). Still, a limited

number of Latina women enter the principal role where they use their cultural knowledge to lead and advocate for the schools they lead. As part of this qualitative study, Latina high school principals shared their personal principal journeys and the necessary skills and supports to be successful principals.

Cultural Knowledge Impacts Student Academic Outcomes

The importance of Latino/a leadership surfaces from research that shows that cultural knowledge in leadership improves student outcomes. Leaders of color who lead students of color provide strong role models significant to identity development and drive for future aspirations (Capper, 2015). Capper's (2015) study investigated how CRT informs educational leadership to eliminate racism by conducting a literature analysis of CRT in educational leadership and found six CRT tenets that inform educational leadership. Successful minority principals demonstrate to all students that leadership positions are attainable by all ethnicities. Similarly, Latino/a principals can serve as role models and provide much needed links between schools and parents and provide guidance to students whose parents lack knowledge of the school system (Fisher, 1998; Murakami et al., 2016). Murakami et al.'s (2016) quantitative study is particularly critical in showing how Latina/o identity shapes their leadership style and impacts their advocacy towards the improvement of student achievement.

Latina principals can directly link social and academic optimism to students and school achievement by embedding aspects of the theory of Community Cultural Wealth (Adams & Hambright, 2011; Yosso, 2005) into their practice (see Theoretical Framework below). When the principal's ethnicity mirrors that of the students, higher student success may occur because Latina principals can take their own schooling experiences to construct their identity as principals (Capper, 2015; Murakami et al., 2016). Key empirical studies on promoting such

optimism include Murakami et al. (2016), which drew positive experiences in Latino/a leaders youth who often took on the pressure in being successful and transformed it into their principal identity.

Latina women's personal student experiences and familiarity with two cultures (American and Latino) may provide insight into their leadership and that of their colleagues (Gonzalez & Ortiz, 2009; Magdaleno, 2006; Palacio, 2013). A key study on four school administrators (two principals and two assistant principals) illustrates how aspects from community cultural wealth impacted their orientations towards equity advocacy and leadership, specifically, how their navigational capital, namely how they learned to navigate the educational setting, influenced their equity advocacy (Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2019). These Latino/a school administrators' actions demonstrate that they are motivated by their own personal experiences of racism, classism, and xenophobia to support and advocate for the students and communities they lead (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Martinez et al., 2016; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2019).

Furthermore, quantitative data support a nationwide survey as part of the National Latino/a Leadership Project demonstrated that many of the 132 Latina leader participants built on familial and linguistic capital of Latina/o families; they did so in strength-based ways to promote parent engagement in schools (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Specifically, this study showed that Latina women had a strong passion for their profession and embraced their *Latinidad*- all aspects of their culture-in their leadership as they connected important educational gaps of both addressing systemic issues and promoting the success of students.

Such leadership capital suggests that Latina women can lead successfully when hired and demonstrate results such as increased stability, improved test scores, lowered disciplinary issues,

and increased parent involvement (Gonzalez & Ortiz, 2009; Palacio, 2013). Several studies on Latina women's strengths in principal roles include resiliency, value for hard-work, community, commitment, confidence, student academic focus, positive attitude, and safeguarding their role (Magdaleno, 2004; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Palacio, 2013, unpublished). Research shows that Latina principals emphasized the importance of including home language in building relationships with their school's families to collaboratively support the academic achievement of their students, thus, Latina principals can create an environment of connectedness by creating a culturally accessible and compassionate school (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Latina principals can serve not only as social activists but also as public intellectuals and curriculum innovators (Johnson, 2006).

Such strengths have been shown to influence student achievement. Knoepal and Rinehart (2009) studied both male and female K-12 campus-level administrators over a three-year period to determine if certain administrative traits influenced student academic achievement. Their findings suggest that school administrators who possess extensive training and knowledge about policy practices, instructional leadership, and professional development have a greater impact on student academic achievement (Knoepal & Rinehart, 2009). Data from a study conducted by Newton et al. (2003) reveals that women prefer instructional leadership more often than men.

Another study explicitly on women leaders revealed valuable leadership qualities. Sherman (2000) interviewed 21 women school administrators and found distinct leadership styles among them. Prominent with the women was cooperative leadership, open communication with stakeholders, and the ability to clearly articulate the vision throughout the school and community. As with the Newton et al. (2003) study, instructional leadership was a high priority for these women as they were often visible in classrooms, nurturing teachers. In a different study,

Jones et al. (2009) focused on the leadership experiences of three middle school principals and results suggest that female principals are more likely to be nurturing, caring and demonstrates aspects of servant and instructional leadership. In this study, participants shared the impact of their implementation of community cultural wealth towards the communities they serve.

Existing Interventions on Training and Recruiting Latino/a Principals

Despite the identified positive impacts of Latina principals, they continue to be underrepresented in public schools due to current recruitment practices. Latino/as educators continue to be recruited and trained primarily from existing teachers in schools and once they enter administrator preparation programs, they are not provided with the culturally appropriate supports such as networking and mentoring opportunities.

Studies have recommended preparing principal candidates through integrating social justice practices and collaborative efforts between school districts and administrator preparation programs. Research suggests designing administrator programs that include social justice values and offer opportunities for their participants to examine whether their biases and beliefs influence their leadership practice and the educational attainment of their students (Hernandez & Marshall, 2017; Sanchez et al., 2008). Another recommendation includes establishing programs with local school districts to develop minorities and women in educational administration. Tonnsen (1989) examined programs that were successful in preparing and placing minorities and women in educational administration. One program, no longer in existence, was the Minority Administrator Program (MAP) at the University of South Carolina. In this program, a team of principals selected interns to participate in the program sponsored by the intern's school district who not only paid their salaries but allowed them to engage exclusively in undertaking leadership responsibilities during the entire school year under the principal's mentorship. The

program placed 98% of their participants in principal roles (Tonnsen, 1989). A second program took place in Duval County, Florida, The Administrator Intern Program (AIP), also for minorities and women, began in 1980 with the purpose of balancing the staff composition of the schools. The program placed 90% of its participants in school principal positions. Despite being dated, these studies illustrate the potential success in increasing women and minority principals when school districts and administrator programs collaborate with one another.

Challenges in Recruiting and Supporting Aspiring Latina Principals

Despite efforts in increasing the number of minority principals, the growth in the percentage of Latina principals remains stagnant due to the limited number of potential candidates. Only a small percentage of Latina women holding a bachelor's degree enter the teaching profession, which constitutes the main pool for principal candidates (Flores, 2016; Gandara & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic, 2015). Studies have demonstrated that the college-going rate of Latinas has increased from 54% in 2002 to 70% in 2013 (Santiago et al., 2015); however, they still have lower rates of college degrees than women of other ethnic groups (Flores, 2016; Gandara & White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic, 2015) partly because Latinas lack the skills and knowledge required to navigate through bureaucracy of obtaining a college degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Latino parents encourage their daughters to attend college without understanding the demands that the collegiate institutions place on their daughters resulting in Latinas confronting unique challenges as they navigate through a foreign and complex system (Espinoza, 2015; Jackson, 2013).

Due to the university demands confronted by Latino/a students, graduation rates have not been consistent with the attrition of Latinos, especially Latinas. A study conducted by the Eva

Longoria Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education found that there has only been a slight increase in the college completion rate since 1975 (Gandara et al., 2013). Graduation rates of Latinas were at 31.3% in 2008, still significantly lower than the rates for White women at 45.8%. Latinas hold 7.4% of the degrees earned by women, though they constitute 16% of women in 2012 (Santiago et al., 2015). Similarly, of the teacher population in the United States, only 9% of teachers are Latino/a (NCES, 2015) without any evidence collected specifically for Latina teachers. In California, 15% of the public school teaching population is Latina (California Department of Education, 2019). This reference is vital because teaching is the most significant pipeline into school administration.

Latina women enter school administration because they see themselves reflected in the communities they serve and seek to become change agents. Historically Latinas have demonstrated a strong political consciousness in not only fighting for rights in their community but also as advocates for human rights (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). In their roles as principals, most Latina principals understand the poverty and challenges faced by their students and use this understanding to serve as advocates for the communities they serve (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). However, as stated earlier, to facilitate the process of Latinas becoming principals, mentoring systems, support networks, and interventions specific to Latina women are central to their career development (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2000; Lopez, 2018; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015).

Gaps in the Research

Studies on women as educational administrators indicates that even though they are obtaining educational leadership positions, the majority of the positions they hold are at the elementary level (NCES, 2016). Although Latina principals constitute approximately 4.5% of all public school principals in the United States, the exact figure they possess at the high school

level is unknown. However, one can deduce that the figure is significantly small due to the patterns represented by all women in leadership roles. Most importantly, Latina principals are not a common focus in empirical studies and research articles. To address this shortcoming, this study highlighted the stories of Latina high school principals through the lens of Critical Race Theory, Latino/a Critical Race Theory, Chicana Feminist Epistemology, and Cultural Intuition in an attempt to inspire and recruit future Latinas into these roles.

Theoretical Framework

To present the *testimonios* of Latina high school principals, I developed a conceptual framework that combines Critical Race Theory, Latino/a Critical Race Theory, Community Cultural Wealth, Chicana Feminist Epistemology Framework, and Cultural Intuition to enhance the understanding of their experiences.

LatCrit and Critical Race Theory

To better present the stories of Latina high school principals, a group who has experienced educational oppression, this study will be guided by Critical Race Theory (CRT). In education, CRT empowers researchers to work towards the elimination of racism by understanding the various ways people of color are perceived as subordinate, as defined by race, class, gender, and other forms of oppression (Pérez Huber, 2008). In this study, CRT was specifically used to analyze how the oppression of race and gender appeared in the educational experiences of the Latina principals.

Latino/a Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) builds on CRT to include issues on immigration, language, nativism, gender, class, and race (Aleman, 2009; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit is an essential tool and strategy in this study as it encourages the participation of the marginalized voices of Latina principals who are often

ignored in empirical studies, as they share their own educational and leadership counterstories (Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2005; Taylor, 2016).

LatCrit and CRT researchers have outlined five major tenets to inform the analysis of the experiences of people of color. These tenets include: (a) centrality and ubiquity of racism (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Taylor, 2016); (b) interest convergence (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Taylor, 2016); (c) historical context and interdisciplinary perspectives (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 2016); (d) importance of narrative and experiential knowledge of people of color (Ladson-Billings, 2016; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 2016); and (e) intersectionality of racism and other forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The three tenets that inform the analysis of this study are the centrality of racism, intersectionality of racism and gender, and the importance of the counternarrative.

The centrality of racism and intersectionality of race and gender highlight how people of color must navigate the broader racist society (Ladson-Billings, 2016). At the same time, people of color, in this case, Latina high school principals, have intersecting identities which may magnify forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). The 14 Latina high school principals in this study learned to navigate public educational systems where their experiences were impacted not just by their racial identities but also by their gender, immigration status, and language views around the use of Spanish and English; thus, intersectionality is a key lens in analyzing the various forms of oppression that impacted their affected both their educational and professional leadership experiences.

In CRT and LatCrit, the participants' personal stories and experiences in the form of *testimonios* are vital in the understanding of systems of racism and oppression (Hernandez &

Murakami, 2016; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The *testimonios* in this study serve as counterstories as they directly challenge the “majority” or White experiences because they reveal the various forms of oppression, in this case, racism and sexism, experienced by those members who are not part of the White, male, heterosexual, or the middle and/or upper class (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In this study, the notion of counternarrative or counterstory is essential to the analysis of the participants’ *testimonios*. Their lived experiences differ from the prominent White and male high school principal spaces and uncover the racism and sexism experienced by Latina high school principals.

Community Cultural Wealth

Given that Latina principals will be sharing their *testimonios*, the Model of Community Cultural Wealth will be used as the lens to not only analyze their *testimonios* but also to identify how they implement the various forms of capital into their practice. Yosso’s (2005) study defined the “Model of Community Cultural Wealth,” as a list of capital attributes offered by Latina women. The first form of capital is aspirational capital and it entails the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of barriers (real or perceived). Linguistic capital is the second form of capital defined as the intellectual and social skills learned through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style. Navigational capital, the third form of capital, consists of having the skills needed to maneuver through social institutions. The fourth form of capital, social capital is defined as being a part of a network of people and being aware of community resources. Familial Capital includes having cultural knowledge nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and Cultural Institution. Resistant Capital is resistance to oppression in communities of color and refers to those knowledge and skills cultivated through behavior that challenges inequality. In the

last form of capital, religion, the individual understands that the Catholic culture as the dominant religion of the Latino community, bringing people together through faith and leadership.

Chicana Feminist Epistemology Framework

A Chicana Feminist Epistemology (CFE) grounds itself on the life experiences of Chicanas and allows Chicanas to analyze how their lives are being documented, interpreted, and reported (Delgado-Bernal, 2002). Delgado-Bernal (2002) described that using CFE a form of documenting the untold and often ignored stories of Latina women as way of actively resisting epistemological racism. In Chicana Feminist Epistemology, research participants analyze their own life experiences as they differ from those of men and White women. Delgado-Bernal drew on the works of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) as she explained being able to infuse both the researchers spirituality and politics into their study and writing to actively challenge various forms of oppression. This study builds on Delgado-Bernal's study as it provided Latina high school principals with the opportunity to share their own *testimonios* through unstructured interviews (*platicas*) conducted by a Latina high school principal. These interviews were subsequently analyzed through the researcher's own Cultural Intuition. In addition, as part of the framework, Delgado-Bernal's concept of Cultural Intuition allows one to acknowledge the unique viewpoints that Chicana scholars, like myself, bring to the research process in both the *platicas*, findings and analysis, and constructing of the participants' *testimonios*. As such, I engaged in individual *platicas* with the participants, used my Cultural of Intuition to code the findings, and analyzed their experiences to share their *testimonios*.

In this study, the centrality of racism, the importance of narrative, experiential knowledge of Latina women, Cultural Intuition, and the intersectionality of racism and sexism is used in the design and analyze the findings.

Conclusion

The Latino population in the United States continues to flourish, and consequently, the percentage of Latino students in America's public schools is increasing. Latino students constitute approximately one fourth of all public school students. However, these students continue to attend public schools with predominantly White principals. This qualitative study, through the lens of CRT, LatCrit, and Chicana Feminist Epistemology, attempted to increase the presence of Latina high school principals in the literature. The study seeks to inspire aspiring Latina principals through sharing the personal, educational, and professional stories of current Latinas in the principalship.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN

The Latino/a population is the largest minority in the United States, comprising approximately 18.3% of the total population (U.S. Census, 2018). Although it is predicted that the Latino/a population will continue to grow and that about one quarter of the US student population will be Latino/a by 2025, Latino/a representation in school leadership remains at 8.2% (NCES, 2011; NCES, 2016) with the majority of Latina principals leading elementary schools (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). Despite the increase of the Latino/a population, the voice and presence of Latina high school principals remains scarce in educational research.

In this qualitative study, I investigated the following research questions:

- 1) In what ways, if any, do Latina public high school principals incorporate community cultural wealth into their practice?
- 2) What barriers and supports do Latina public high school principals say they encountered in their leadership roles?
- 3) What advice do Latina public high school principals have for aspiring Latina principals?

Methods

Research Design and Rationale

This project is a qualitative study. Qualitative design is appropriate because the purpose of the study is to explore the individual stories of how Latina high school principals incorporate community cultural wealth into their practice and address the barriers or obstacles they face in their profession. Qualitative methods allow us to achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For instance, this study allowed Latina principals to share the obstacles and supports that allowed them to lead high schools. As

such, a qualitative approach enabled me to describe how participants interpret what they experienced, for instance implicit bias, and how they made sense of their meanings through the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Though a quantitative approach could be possible for this study, qualitative methods are better suited to respond to the study's research questions. A quantitative study would not provide the opportunity to take a more holistic approach in delving deeply to understand the experiences encountered by Latina high school principals. A qualitative study allows me to ask questions that will deeply explore Latina principals' individual beliefs, experiences, and reactions in a way not possible through a quantitative study.

Site and Population

As a result of the teacher and principal shortage in 1999, Governor Davis and the State Legislature mandated the creation of the Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) at both UC Berkeley and UCLA to offer prestige management training to school principals in order to help create more academically successful schools (Cheung et al., 2019). Assembly Bill ABX1 of 1999 made new funding available to the universities to provide scholarships for students who demonstrated a commitment to impacting schools who are difficult to staff (Cheung et al., 2019). Through this funding, several young people from low-income and working-class communities returned to their neighborhoods as highly trained teachers and school administrators. In 2016, the funding was re-authorized the President's Educator Fellowship and students with significant financial need continued to participate in PLI. For over 20 years, more than 1300 PLI graduates serve vulnerable and historically underserved youth, primarily in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area (Cheung et al., 2019). These graduates are recognized for their high level of leadership preparedness, diversity, and commitment to serving in high-needs schools.

In contrast to the national average of principals, PLI Latino/a students have a 27.5% graduation rate, a 20.5% higher than the national average of principals (Cheung et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The rate of female graduates is at 65.5%, higher than the 52% rate of female principals. As a result of the UCLA program, 47% of its graduates have taken school leadership positions at the district, principal, and assistant principal levels. However, data on the percentage of Latina alumni who currently hold leadership positions at the principal role or higher is not published.

Though PLI doesn't specifically recruit Latina educators, its mission is designed to prepare social justice educators that serve as leaders who advocate for quality learning opportunities, improve teaching and learning, promote educational achievement for all students, create a democratic and culturally-responsive learning environments, and build partnerships with parents and community groups (PLI Website). These areas align with Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Theory that identifies the six forms of capital that educational leaders, specifically leaders of color, often use to frame their interactions with students to promote their academic success. These forms of capital include aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance.

Participants of this qualitative study represented the *testimonios* of Latina high school principals in California. Initially, I used the criteria that the participants needed to be alumni of the Principal Leadership Institute Program at either UCLA or Berkeley; however, due to the small percentage of Latina high school principals and the COVID-19 pandemic limiting recruitment, the criteria for Principal Leadership Institute alumni was waived. Instead, through snowballing and posting on various social media groups, I recruited additional Latina high school principals. The participants had at least one year of high school principal experience as a

site principal, which allowed them to share the barriers and experiences encountered during their initial year of principalship. I recruited 14 participants in order to ensure a variety of experiences. Each expressed interest in being a participant and volunteered to participate in this study. Last, I recruited participants by ensuring that they understood the importance of the study and providing them with a voice to share their *testimonios* in an effort to support aspiring Latina school principals.

Recruitment

As an PLI alumnus and current public high school principal in Los Angeles, I worked alongside various Latina high school principals who are PLI alumni as colleagues, through their participation in district sponsored professional development workshops, leadership development workshops, and attending quarterly school leadership meetings. I also maintained a relationship with the PLI professors and network. As a result, two potential members of this study expressed interest through interactions at district meetings and professional development workshops.

In an effort to recruit additional participants, PLI alumni were recruited who are Latina high school principals through individual emails and the weekly email blast sent out by both the UCLA and Berkeley organizations. One additional alumnus was recruited through this email blast and as a result, I waived the PLI alumni requirement and recruited additional participants through a Snowball method and by posting recruitment announcements in professional social media networks. Participants were ensured to understand the study, their commitment, and the steps to ensure confidentiality. I then reviewed this information with each participant after UCLA approval for the study. I will also embed the information in writing within the commitment process.

Participants

Roxana

Roxana is a first-year principal at a high school in East Los Angeles. The urban school she leads is composed of approximately 250 students whose demographics include English Learners, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and low-income students. The majority of students at the school are first-generation students, meaning that their parents did not receive schooling in the United States. Roxana is also a first-generation student who arrived at the United States when she was 15 years old and was bused from her home in South Los Angeles to the Valley to attend high school. After graduating high school, Roxana attended community college and later transferred to a four-year university where she received her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree. Prior to her role as principal, Roxana was an elementary school principal, attendance counselor at both the high school and elementary levels, a district coach and administrator, and a high school assistant principal.

Beatriz

Beatriz is currently in her second year as a high school principal. The urban school she leads is located in the center of Downtown Los Angeles and is composed of approximately 900 students. The demographics of the school she leads includes English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her school are first-generation students. Though located in the inner-city, the school Beatriz leads has demonstrated an increase in academic success, English Learner reclassification, and graduation rates. Beatriz herself is a first-generation college student who grew up in a single parent household who became a mother in high school. With the support of her mother, Beatriz attended a four-year university outside of Los Angeles and then transferred to a four-year

university in Los Angeles where she obtained her bachelor's degree. Beatriz later attended a different four-year university in Los Angeles where she earned her master's degree. Prior to her role as principal, Beatriz was a high school teacher, high school dean of students, and assistant principal.

Claudia

Claudia is in her third of year as a high school principal. The urban school she leads is located in the center of Downtown Los Angeles and is composed of approximately 450 students. The demographics of the students at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, a small percentage of African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her school are first-generation students. Claudia herself is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in community surrounding the school she leads. At the end of her senior year of high school, Claudia became a mother, and instead of attending her dream school on the East Coast, she attended a local private university where she earned her bachelor's degree. Claudia eventually attended a four-year public university in Los Angeles where she earned her Master's and Administrative Credential. Prior to her role as principal, Claudia was a middle school teacher, high school teacher, district instructional coach, and a high school assistant principal at the same school she currently leads.

Natalia

Natalia is in her eighth year as a high school principal. The urban high school she leads is located in the center of Downtown Los Angeles and is composed of approximately 450 students. The demographics of the students at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, a small percentage of Filipino students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her school are first-generation students. Natalia herself is a first-generation college graduate,

however, she is a second-generation Latina who grew up in a suburb outside of Los Angeles. She earned her high school diploma by passing the GED. Natalia attended a community college and later transferred to a four-year public university, where she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees. Prior to her principal role, Natalia was a high school teacher and assistant principal.

Carla

Carla is in her tenth year as a high school principal. The urban high school she leads is composed of approximately 500 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her school are first-generation students. Carla herself is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in a neighboring community to where her school is located. After graduating high school, Carla attended a four-year public university located outside of Los Angeles. After earning her bachelor's degree, Carla attended a four-year public university where she obtained her Master's in Teaching, Master's in Administration, and Doctorate degrees. Prior to her role as principal, Carla was a middle school teacher, high school coordinator, middle school assistant principal, and a high school principal at a different school.

Rosie

Rosie is in her sixth year as a high school principal. The suburban high school that she leads is composed of approximately 2,700 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her high school are first-generation students. Rosie herself is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in a city that neighbors her current school. After graduating high school, Rosie attended a public four-year university in Southern California. After earning her bachelor's degree, Rosie completed her administration credential at a different

public Southern California University. Prior to her current role, Rosie was a middle school teacher, high school teacher, and assistant principal at two other high schools in her district.

Linda

Linda is a third-year high school principal. The urban high school that she leads is composed of approximately 850 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her high school are first-generation students. Lucia herself is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in the community where her school is located. After graduating high school, Linda attended a public four-year university in Northern California. After earning her bachelor's degree, Rosie completed her administration credential at a public Southern California University. Prior to her current role, Linda was a teacher, categorical programs coordinator, and assistant principal at the high school she currently leads.

Amanda

Amanda is a second-year high school principal. The suburban high school that she leads is composed of approximately 640 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her high school are first-generation students. Amanda herself is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in the neighboring community where her school is located. After graduating high school, After graduating high school, Amanda attended a community college before transferring public four-year university in Southern California. After earning her bachelor's degree, Amanda attended two different public universities in Southern California to complete both her teaching and administration credential. Prior to her current role,

Amanda was a middle school teacher, categorical programs coordinator, district instructional expert, and a high school assistant principal.

Elena

Elena is a fourth-year high school principal and is currently in her first year at a school that is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2021. The suburban high school when open, will be composed of approximately 1800 students. The demographics at her school, based on the community, will most likely include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American and Asian American students, and low-income students. Elena is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in the community neighboring her current school. After graduating high school, Elena attended a community college before transferring to a public four-year university in Southern California. After earning her bachelor's degree, Elena attended a public university in Southern California to complete both her teaching and administration credential. Prior to her current role, Elena was a high school teacher, administration designee, middle school assistant principal, and a high school assistant principal.

Eva

Eva is in her eighth year high school principal. The urban high school that she leads is composed of approximately 500 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her high school are first-generation students. Eva herself is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in a neighboring community where her school is located. After graduating high school, Eva attended a public four-year university in Southern California. After earning her bachelor's degree, Rosie completed her teaching and administration credential, as

well as her doctoral degree at a private Southern California University. Prior to her current role, Eva was a high school teacher and high school assistant principal.

Sara

Sara is currently in her third year as a high school principal. The urban high school that she leads is composed of approximately 1,850 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her high school are first-generation students. Sara herself is a first-generation college graduate. After graduating high school, Sara attended a private four-year university outside of California. Prior to her current role, Sara was a high school teacher, middle school coordinator, elementary assistant principal, and elementary principal.

Laura

Laura is currently in her first year as a high school principal. The suburban high school that she leads is composed of approximately 1,850 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her high school are first-generation students. Sara herself is a first-generation college graduate. After graduating high school, Laura attended a public four-year university in Southern California. Prior to her current role, Laura was a high school teacher, instructional coordinator, and assistant principal at the school she leads.

Olga

Olga is in her twelfth year as a high school principal. The suburban high school that she leads is composed of approximately 2,300 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, and low-income students. The majority of the students at her high school are first-generation students. Olga herself is a first-

generation college graduate who grew up in a neighboring community where her school is located. After graduating high school, Olga got married and started her family. At the age of 28, Olga enrolled in a community college and later transferred to a public four-year university in Southern California. After earning her bachelor's degree, Rosie completed her teaching and administration credential at the same public Southern California University. Prior to her current role, Eva was a high school teacher, high school assistant principal, and continuation high school principal.

Celia

Celia is a fourth-year high school principal and is in her first year at her current school. The suburban high school she leads is composed of approximately 2000 students. The demographics at her school include English Learners, students with IEPs, African American students, Asian American, and low-income students. Celia is a first-generation college graduate who grew up in New York. After graduating high school, Celia attended college at a private four-year university in Texas. After earning her bachelor's degree, Celia also earned her master's degree and doctorate from a private university in Texas. Prior to her current role, Celia was an elementary school teacher, elementary intervention coordinator, elementary district instructional coach, high school assistant principal, elementary school principal, and a middle school principal.

Data Collection Methods

In this qualitative study, I used *platicas* (interviews) as the primary data source. *Platicas* are a key tool used in LatCrit and Chicana Feminist Epistemology, which allows the researcher to build a relationship with the participant through an organic conversation, one which is not as feasible through structured, formal interviews. Each participant was interviewed twice, for

approximately two hours total. Given COVID-19 guidelines, all interviews took place via Zoom. The *platicas* were recorded and transcribed. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences and to make meaning of their experience as I analyzed their *testimonios* (Seidman, 2006).

Through the interview process, I investigated the study's research questions. During the *platica*, participants answered questions relating to how Latina principals embed community cultural wealth into their practice (Research Question #1), how they approached barriers encountered their leadership role (Research Question #2), and the advice they have for aspiring Latina High School principals (Research Question #3).

Prior to the first *platica*, participants were asked to read the article, "Whose culture has capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," by Tara Yosso. The article provided participants with a common understanding of the features of Community Cultural Wealth which was discussed during the first *platica*.

For the first question, I expected the participants to share specific examples of how they implemented aspects of Community Cultural Wealth into their practice. *Familial* capital examples include understanding the family structures that exist in the communities they serve, supporting the bond between the families and schools, collaborating with families in the community to better support the needs of their students by identifying needed resources for the school community, and having *familial* or kinship relationships with friends and other principals to support them in their principal roles (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). Examples of *Linguistic* capital might include being able to speak English and Spanish fluently to communicate with students and parents, and using their language fluency to build relationships with them (Murakami et al., 2018). Navigational capital examples might include relying on a friend,

teacher, or counselor to learn to navigate the educational system. For resistant capital, the participants might identify advocating for the needs of their school community and shifting systems at their school site to best fit the needs of their students. Social capital examples can highlight the importance of social networks to be successful in their principal role.

For the second question, I expected the following barriers encountered as responses: family and home responsibilities, gender role stereotyping, overt discrimination, administrative programs that lack curriculum and materials for both women and students of color, gender discrimination in hiring decisions, unequal salaries, and hostile work environments (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). In addition, participants might also include confronting cultural bias, typecasting, and gender inferiority as barriers they had faced (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Hibbets, 2005; Magdaleno & Mendoza, 2006; Mendez-Morse, 2004; Trujillo-Ball, 2003). I probed these types of responses to find out what specific barriers Latina high school principals encountered on their path to becoming principals, and barriers they encountered once they reached the principal role. I expected this study to provide further examples of those identified by the literature, as well as others identified using the lens of CRT and LatCrit by employing Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Cultural Intuition methodologies.

I also expected participants to share the skills and strengths that are needed to be successful to overcome challenges in the principal role as advice for aspiring Latina principals (Research Question #3). Based on the literature, some of their responses might include having a formal mentor, being part of a support network, and participating in workshops that are specific to Latina women to further their career development (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2000; Lopez et al., 2006; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Other responses I expected the participants to share are specific to their character and might include resiliency, valuing hard-work, community,

commitment, confidence, student academic focus, positive attitude, and safeguarding their role (Magdaleno, 2004; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Palacio, 2013, unpublished). The participants might also identify skills and/or solutions that did not have a positive result in addressing the barriers and discuss why they did not work in overcoming the barrier. The participants might recommend that aspiring Latina principals join mentoring networks available in their organization, if possible identify a mentor, build relationships with other aspiring principals, participate in networking and support opportunities, and most importantly, not to hesitate to reach out for support if needed. Previous literature identifies these resources as key for aspiring principals; however, no studies exist where current Latina high school principals offer this advice to aspiring Latina principals. By probing these known ways of overcoming barriers, the researcher sought to understand the needed skills to be successful as a Latina high school principal, such as asking them to identify mentors and how they established the mentorship relationship, as well as asking if they were members of any formal or informal professional networks and their level of participation in these groups. By understanding these skills, aspiring Latina principals can learn from the experiences of the participants who share their gender and ethnicity and apply those skills to their practice if necessary

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews were examined based on the transcription of the recordings. The transcriptions were analyzed for themes and patterns related to the constructs of the research questions. Research data was managed, coded, and analyzed using my Cultural Intuition, CRT, and LatCrit to identify themes and patterns and the use of the program *Quirkos* to organize those findings.

The first category included how Latina principals incorporate navigational, familial, aspirational, resistance, social or linguistic capital into their practice (Research Question #1: support from their own families, interacting with parents at their school, using their language to connect with parents and students, building relationships with families, staff, and students).

The second set of categories included barriers and challenges (Research Question #2 categories: Family and Home Obligations; Discrimination, Lack of preparation, Hiring Practices, Work Environments), advice for aspiring Latina principals (Research Question #3 categories: Member of a Formal Network; Professional Development; Mentor; Leadership Characteristics; Peer Support Group).

Positionality and Role Management

Two participants and a colleague were already familiar with who I am as a principal. The participants were aware of my enrollment in a doctoral program and that this work served as the focus of my dissertation. It is important to note that I do not hold positional power over any participant. To ensure that participants did not feel that there are consequences for their involvement, their names and identity remained anonymous. I communicated that their involvement provides voices to Latina principals to better support aspiring Latina principals and not for my own educational or professional goals.

Ethical Issues

Informed consent and confidentiality are ethical issues inherent in any qualitative study. To address the issue of confidentiality, I ensured participant anonymity by creating pseudonyms for all participants and keeping the data collected on my personal password protected devices and deleting it after my dissertation was complete. Upon request, I provided the participants the findings to ensure that nothing was falsified or misunderstood. Further, I provided participants

with the option to share a response off the record if necessary; and so stop recording. Also, since participants received a copy of my findings, they had the option to make any clarifying statements that might be misrepresented or possibly reveal their identity. In addition, because these Latina principals have multiple years of experience in their positions, and because I do not supervise them or report to anyone who supervises them, their employment was not at risk by participating in this study.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

This study is subject to the threat of reactivity due to my role within the organization. The principals might not be completely honest with me during the interviews because they may want to present themselves in their best light to me. To encourage participants to share their true experiences and opinions, I repeatedly emphasized that they can help future Latina principals most by being completely candid about their personal leadership identity, the challenges faced, and how they overcame them. To increase internal validity, I utilized direct quotes from various interviews to justify my findings.

Another threat to the credibility of my study is my own bias in discussing the barriers and challenges aspiring Latina principals encounter. In my personal experiences and observations, I witnessed Latina principals initially being ignored by parents and staff simply due to their gender and race. To address the threat of my own bias, I relied heavily on interview quotes and triangulation.

Due to the nature of a qualitative study, the study is not generalizable to a specific population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This is a unique study that takes place under unique circumstances with a unique group of Latina principals. This study focused on identifying Latina high school principal implementation of Community Cultural Wealth into their practice and

providing aspiring Latina principals with advice. I will not make claims regarding the ability to generalize to all Latina principals or all school districts; however, the findings from this study can be used to generalize the theories that frame the study through analytic generalizability. It will be up to the reader to determine to what extent these findings apply to their context.

Study Limitations

Limitations are an inherent part of a qualitative study. This specific qualitative study is focused in scope, and although the problem can be studied across the country, the Latina population in the United States is not homogenous. The results of this study may be particular to the characteristics of the Latina population in this region. The study consists of 14 participants who are representatives of Latina high school principals; their lived and shared experiences might not reflect those experiences of the group as a whole. However, the use of the study's recommendations can be used by aspiring Latina high school principals and should be implemented by university K-12 administrator leadership programs with the awareness of the limited scope.

Summary

This qualitative study aimed to take a deeper look at the experiences of Latina principals. The study sought to identify how Latina high school principals implement aspects of Community Cultural Wealth, in particular the different forms of capital such as navigational, aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, and resistance, into their practice, and the barriers and supports they encountered in their principal roles. The study provided the participants with the opportunity to share their *testimonios* as well as provide guidance to aspiring Latina principals. This qualitative study fills a gap in the literature by highlighting the experiences of Latina high school principals

through CRT, LatCrit, Chicana Feminist Epistemology, and Cultural Intuition methodologies and lenses in data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Lessons Learned

This chapter summarizes the findings of a qualitative study that centered on the experiences of Latina high school principals. The findings of this study depict how Community Cultural Wealth impacts Latina high school principals' practice, challenges them in their role as high school principals, and highlights the advice they would give to aspiring Latina high school principals. Community Cultural Wealth refers to the various forms of capital—such as navigational, aspirational, resistant, linguistic, familial, and social—possessed by Latina high school principals.

The findings are based on an analysis of two unstructured *platicas* with 14 participants that focused on three research questions. The findings were analyzed by using the lens of Critical Race Theory and LatCrit while using Chicana Feminist Epistemology Framework, specifically, my Cultural Intuition, to code and understand the transcriptions.

Principle Findings

Previous research focused on Latina principals and assistant principals; however, limited studies exist that specifically examine the experiences of Latina high school principals (Niño et al., 2017). High school principals face different challenges than do elementary or middle school principals in that elementary principals are not expected to spend long hours doing athletic supervision or creating action plans to address high school graduation rates and college readiness metrics. I wanted to uncover the nature of the lived experiences of Latina high school principals. The qualitative analysis conducted in this study revealed how 14 Latina high school principals' leadership is influenced by their personal experiences, and how they encounter challenges in their roles based on their gender and race. Additionally, these principals provide

advice to aspiring Latina high school principals. Analysis of the data through the lens of CRT, LatCrit, CFE, and Cultural Intuition produced eight principle findings in response to my original research questions.

Research Question #1: In what ways, if any, do Latina public high school principals incorporate community cultural wealth into their practice?

The first three findings correspond to the study's first research question. These findings are based on the personal experiences through the form of *testimonios* revealed by the participants during the initial *platica*. *Platicas* were used as a form of CRT, LatCrit, and Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Cultural Intuition to ensure that Latina high school principals' *testimonios* were documented. All the participants in this study are first-generation college students whose personal experiences with the various forms of capital in their upbringing and education, analyzed through the lens of CRT, LatCrit, and Chicana Feminist Epistemology shaped their leadership practices (Adams et al., 2011; Yosso, 2005). That lens specifically examined how the educational experiences of underserved Latina, women of color, and their collective experiences with culture, language, and immigration status shaped how they implemented Community Cultural Wealth into their practice.

Finding #1: This study showed that Latina high school principals highlighted navigational capital and brought their own lived navigational experiences, based on their race and culture, to bear on their leadership choices.

All 14 Latina high school principals in this study highlighted navigational capital and brought their own lived navigational experiences based on the intersection of their race and culture to bear on their leadership choice. A previous study conducted by Murakami and Hernandez (2016) focused on one elementary school principal's story, which illustrated the

development of their professional and racial identity amidst the challenges of White culture. The Latina high school principals in this study uniquely hold their own lived navigational experiences in mind as leaders in their commitment to explicitly teach and communicate navigational tools at their school. They express their commitment to the school community at large and their choice of resources for parents, reflecting their commitment to navigational skills.

Beatriz shared a *testimonio* that showed how her family's needs dictated her early educational experience and how they lacked key navigational knowledge:

[I realize now] how important it was for me to start preschool because we started school at a young age... My mom [enrolled] us in preschool because she needed to go to work.

But I realize now just how important it was for me to have had that foundation.

As a result of not knowing how to navigate the educational system, Beatriz shares that her mother was not fully informed of the benefits of placing her brother in the gifted program; her mother was reluctant to place him in the gifted program because it meant that her children would be in different tracks. As a result of that decision, her felt guilty because her brother ended up in juvenile hall. Beatriz's mother, like several working undocumented single parents, did not seem to fully comprehend the positive impact of placing her brother in the gifted program. Due to the convenience of having her children in the same track, she opted to keep him on the regular track with his siblings. An awareness of this lack of navigational skills shapes Beatriz's leadership. Navigational skills such as understanding the benefits of gifted programs would have allowed Beatriz's brother to succeed academically at an early age. However, when Beatriz was identified as gifted, solely due to the advocacy of her teachers, her mother placed her in the gifted program.

I was the second one in line. My teachers spoke to my mom to convince her [about] the importance of allowing them to switch my track to be... part of the GATE program at the

school. And that's when she allowed it...So that decision allowed me to go to college. I was the first one in my family [to go] to college...What I was the first one, you know, my family's first-generation.

This *testimonio* indicates that when school personnel take the moment to explain the benefits of programs to parents, they are more likely to make informed decisions which will influence their child's academic trajectory. As a result of her navigational experience, understanding of the educational system, and shared experiences identified through the lens of LatCrit, CFE, and Cultural Intuition, Beatriz applies culturally responsive leadership as she provides the parents at her school, several of whom are undocumented working-class parents like her mother, with various opportunities to develop relationships with staff that will promote student academic success: "So whether [I invite] a librarian to teach our parents about library access... [at our] monthly meetings or our college counselor to talk about the college path. Every month we rotate a topic." The comment connects to Beatriz's personal navigational experience and shows that she understands the importance in guiding parents to make informed decisions for their first-generation students by providing them with the necessary workshops to educate them in navigating the educational system.

Leaders recall that navigational skills do not lose their importance in college. To navigate the higher educational system, Carla, a first-generation college student, shared her own story of how her college counselor sent a cohort of students of color to the same college, to support one another:

I went to Santa Barbara with my neighbor who I've known since we were little...I think at [my] high school...my college advisor would tend to send us in cohorts... So we weren't alone, both in experiencing how different Santa Barbara was but also, just in

experiencing that change together and having folks to talk to about what you're seeing and experiencing and having a tight network.

Based on her personal experiences, Carla motivates her students, most of whom will be first-generation college students, to lean on each other as they navigate the educational realm. She encourages them to have self-advocacy and to ask for resources, as she does as an educational leader, “I’m like, you guys have to learn to ask for resources and that's what they’re there for. But it is not easy. It’s a skill you have to gain and one that I continue to rely on as I continue to develop as a leader.”

Asking is a key navigational skill. Claudia shared that due to her lack of understanding how to navigate the college system and being afraid to ask for help, as a first-generation Latina college student, she sometimes worked harder than needed.

I think in high school, I had a lot of help. In college... I didn’t know how to navigate anything; I was still pretty lost. I spent the whole first year climbing up this hill because the [school] building was on a hill. And because I was so broke, I climbed up the hill. I thought [the university] charged for the shuttle to take you up to the top. So I would climb that hill. I would get to class pouring sweat because you know I was too afraid to ask the [cost of the] shuttle and I knew that I didn't have money. So I was like, I probably won't be able to afford it...And food. I had no idea where the cafeteria was. I didn't ask anyone. And it took me a year to figure out where the cafeteria was and that the shuttle was free.

This *testimonio* indicates that Claudia, as a first-generation college student, was embarrassed to ask for help and did not want others to know that she did not have the economic funds to pay for necessary items and serves as a counterstory to the dominant experiences of White students. As a

result of her experiences and understanding her school community's needs and use of LatCrit to analyze this quote, Claudia applies culturally responsive leadership as she reminds her staff of the importance of understanding their students' backgrounds, many of whom reflect her background and common upbringing, as they prepare them to navigate the college world.

And we, you know, like our teachers [don't know our kids] so they're selling this formula that does not fit this community. And so I think maybe again, bringing awareness to [the staff]... Teach the kid that's in front of you, not the kid you think is in front of you.

Encourage them to ask questions. Listen to them.

Claudia uses her understanding of the students' backgrounds as informed by her own personal, racial, cultural, and educational background to implement culturally responsive leadership as defined by Rodela et al. (2019) as she addresses areas that her staff can improve to better prepare their students to navigate the college system by fully understanding the challenges faced by their students.

Due to not learning how to navigate the educational system through her schoolteachers or counselors, Natalia connects how her parents attempted to influence her in making her college decisions based on her sister's choices. Luckily, Natalia, a first-generation college student, asked her peers for support in navigating the educational system.

My parents are kind of like, oh, just go to, you know, Cal State Fullerton, it's pretty close to us. My sister was going to go there... So I feel like I [was] just navigating [by] asking people, asking friends. It was really rough. It was really rough for sure. So I feel like I'm still figuring out... I [felt that] there was nobody that would... answer a question...

[Counselors] didn't do a lot of discussions in class or come see me. I didn't... seek them out and I don't know if that was that experience for everyone or just some of us.

As a result of her own lack of navigational support, Natalia has set up a system of support at her school where staff and counselors often meet with students, most of whom are first-generation students of color, to discuss post high school options. For Natalia, it does not matter whether students' plans are a "four-year university, a trade school, community college, or a job. [She] just wants them to feel supported." However, she is committed to prepare and place the student at the appropriate school by providing them with the necessary tools and skills that she lacked in her educational journey.

Understanding diverse students' individual needs is important for Latina high school principals. Roxana is the only participant in this study who was born in a different country and whose navigational *testimonio* demonstrates how she relied on the willingness of others, in this case her counselor, to intervene and support her as she pursued her post-high school journey.

I was undocumented so I couldn't really apply [to college] and to be honest with you, I didn't know about colleges, other than I wanted a degree. I knew I needed to get a degree. But I didn't know how to navigate the system. So the only thing that I knew about was Community College... And so I thought it was that year, when they started asking for your green card to enroll in college. So the way that my counselor helped me out was by enrolling me in Community College prior to graduating. So by the time I graduated I didn't have to show them my documents. And that's the way that she was able to get me into community college.

Aware of such students' reliance, Roxana encourages her staff to support all her students regardless of their legal status. Further, she is committed to ensuring that all students are provided with the necessary tools to be successful in college and brings outside agencies to present to her students and families, on their educational options. She knows she needs to fill in

the gaps and most importantly, she shares her *testimonio* with them so that they understand that they can be successful even if undocumented. Little research uncovers such stories of how school leaders support undocumented students through their academic journeys.

As to navigational skills, all participants' *testimonios* of their lived experiences impact their decisions, systems, and resources offered to their school community. By using the lens of CRT, LatCrit, CFE, and my own Cultural Intuition to analyze these findings, the Latina high school principals in this study demonstrate the influence that peers, teachers, counselors, and friends can have on students' academic trajectories and as such, attempt to build systems within their own schools to support their students and families. The participants, some of which grew up in the communities they lead, have a personal commitment to their school community and use culturally responsive leadership to explicitly teach and provide the necessary navigational resources to support their academics.

Finding #2: The study showed that Latina high school principals use their race, linguistic capital, and aspirational capital to develop and deepen their relationships with their students.

Aside from using their lived navigational capital experiences, all 14 participants in the study admitted to using their race, linguistic capital, and aspirational capital to develop and deepen their relationships with their students. This finding provides further evidence to Martinez et al. (2016) and Murakami et al. (2015) research in that when a principal's race mirrors that of their students, the students are more likely to be motivated to achieve higher success due to seeing their principals as examples of what they can achieve. A previous study conducted by Mendez-Morse et al. (2015) highlighted that Latina principals at elementary schools use linguistic capital in facilitating the development of relationships with their school community. Linguistic capital is identified as an asset by Yosso (2005) and Latina's experiences with

language serves as a bridge between Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit). The participants shared that students' ability to relate to them due to their race, language, and lived experiences facilitates the development of a relationship.

These *testimonios* reveal the deep-rooted excitement and belief that language and race can generate better relationships between school principals and their school community. Rosie shares a *testimonio* about a group of students approaching her and stating that she is the first “Hispanic administrator they ever had,” and they “were so excited to see [me].” From that day forward, Rosie realized that students see her as a “role model” and as a result, she does everything possible to provide them with the necessary support to be successful. Similarly, Carla shares the importance of students being able to connect to her as a person, and not just a principal, in creating relationships and motivating students to succeed.

Being Latina does play a role in a sense of how students relate. I think more than anything, on how students see themselves. If students see role models that look like them, they think that they too can be that person one day... I think those aspects of that [give you] credibility as a leader... Even aspirational. [They] see you [and what is] possible for them.

Carla is aware and understands the impact she can have on her students based solely on her race and uses that racial connection to inspire her students as previous studies have demonstrated (Martinez et al., 2015).

Beatriz shares *testimonios* of several instances where she was approached by members of her school community expressing their excitement of her being a Latina who speaks Spanish. They came to her to share:

I've had people tell me, "I'm extremely glad that you're becoming principal. I'm glad that they're not just bringing anyone else. I'm glad that it's you." And literally, they say, "You're Latina and you speak Spanish. And this is what this community needs. And this is what this community hasn't had because you understand the needs of the community." ... I just feel people see [me and think] she's Latina, she speaks Spanish, and I can connect with her.

The school members want a personal connection, a specific person who embodies their needs. To Beatriz's community, having a principal that is Latina and speaks Spanish is seen as an asset and parents automatically connect with her because they view her as "one of them."

Furthermore, Being able to connect with and understand students by using their language is also evident as Carla shared a story about the impact of speaking Spanish to support a student when she volunteered at a public school in college. In her practice as principal, Carla connects that volunteer experience as she ensures that students' voices are heard in school decisions:

How do we include students' voices right now so that we can make the right decision for them, and so we just started doing that work right now... being there for other folks and like we were [talking] back and forth. *Hablando asi...* But, you know, we're like, totally in Spanglish mode.

Carla understands how to use her linguistic capital as a principal and often switches between languages when communicating with her community to create a deeper connection with them.

Roxana's own experience as both a Spanish speaker and an English Learner allows her to prioritize and empower the languages spoken by her students:

I want to get across [to] everyone on campus, not only the teachers, but also the staff that not knowing English doesn't mean that the student can't learn. When we talk about that

linguistic capital it is really acknowledging the assets that the English learners come into the classroom with ... we can acknowledge [their skills] and we can learn from them... Eventually they will learn the language but we [need to] recognize what they're already coming in with.

As a school principal, Roxana encourages her staff to build a community of learners with their students even when they don't speak English. She sees this as an opportunity for both students and staff to get to know one another and improve their language skills. Not only does Roxana recognize the linguistic capital her students possess, she is also able to recognize and affirm their knowledge and skills even though they may not speak English. Roxana does not view students' inability to speak English as detrimental. Instead, she acknowledges the skills they bring into the classroom and encourages teachers to build upon their previous knowledge in a way where they each learn from one another.

Linguistic capital is seen as an asset for building community between schools and leaders. Understanding the benefits of speaking Spanish and knowing that she would be an educator, Amanda decided to learn Spanish in college while she studied abroad in Mexico.

Parents are able to come to me directly and share concerns and not feel like they can't go to the principal because she doesn't understand or she can't relate. And yeah I have a little bit of an accent when I speak Spanish but I get the appreciation of "you're attempting or you're trying." It does give them an avenue to be able to feel comfortable and not have to use English if they're not comfortable in English... So my decision to learn Spanish was really a professional choice for my profession that would allow me to communicate with my community.

Amanda's *testimonio* demonstrates how her willingness to learn Spanish positively influences her relationships with parents who approach her and use the language they feel comfortable speaking. By showing that she does not speak Spanish fluently, Amanda creates a relationship based on trust and lack of a judgmental attitude, as parents communicate with her. She also encourages them to approach her directly without the support of the translator. Both she and the parents try to use each other's language to communicate and in the process, learn from each other.

Although two participants are not fluent in Spanish, they agree on the importance of speaking the language to build relationships with their school community. Rosie shares a personal anecdote where she feels that she disappointed parents by using a translator at a parent meeting and although she is unable to communicate with her parents in Spanish, she understands the value of learning Spanish. Natalia shared that her mother did not see value in speaking the Spanish language and did everything in her power to distance herself and her family from her culture. Now, as a principal, Natalia shares that she wished her mother valued the language and culture so that she could not only communicate directly with her school community but build stronger relationships with them.

Claudia uses aspirational capital when she shares her *testimonio* with her students by sharing that she grew up in the same neighborhood with hopes of being able to both inspire and provide them with an example of what they might achieve.

I'm pretty honest. I don't tell [my students] all of my background, but they know that I grew up in that community... I think my hope is that [my experience] creates hope for them...I want the kids to know that really anyone can go to college. It may mean that

they are not on the four-year plan, you know, you might be on the six-year plan or maybe you're on the seven-year plan and that's okay... continue to have that aspiration.

By having lived in the same community and experienced similar events as her students, Claudia is able to establish a deeper connection with her students. She uses that connection to motivate her students to accomplish their goals. She is aware that they might easily be dissuaded from attaining their goals because their path looks different than what is considered normal because she saw her peers do so; however, she reassures them that it is okay for their path to take longer as long as they continue to aspire to achieve it.

Connections are sometimes neither race, language, nor aspirational capital, but simply personal. Roxana shares her *testimonio* with her students not because she wants them to follow her path but because she wants them to understand that all they need to be successful is to have the desire to achieve it. She elaborates that she uses social media to connect with students and reminds them that to be successful they need to have the *ganas* or desire otherwise they will not reach their aspirations. Roxana's use of social media to build connections with students is a novel form of relationship building between principals and their school community.

As school leaders, the participants in this study use their race, aspirational, and linguistic capital to support and encourage their students to thrive. The Latina high school principals in this study are able to merge their shared living experiences to build relationships with their school community. They recognize that their students view them as role models based on their race, common upbringing, and language, and use that connection to motivate them to pursue whatever career they choose through conversations, assemblies, or most recently, social media.

Research Question #2: What barriers and supports do Latina public high school principals say they encountered in their leadership roles?

Two major barriers emerged from the second *platica* that correspond to the study's second research question. The first of these barriers focuses on perceived levels of efficacy due to the participants' intersectionality of race and gender. While this bias is well known, this study revealed that Latina high school principals do not let this bias dissuade them or hinder their work. The second barrier, related to the first, is the difficulty of supervising employees whose actions are not aligned to the school's goals. Though the participants identified these barriers in their practice, they also shared their unique ways and supports used to address them.

Finding #3: The study affirmed that Latina high school principals' leadership efficacy is viewed by others based on their race and gender.

Previous studies demonstrated that women are often not viewed as strong high school leaders (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010). Most of the Latina high school principals in this study (11 of 14) felt that their leadership is sometimes questioned based on not only their gender, but also their race as participants from similar studies conducted on Latina leaders. Mendez-Morse et al. (2015) collected national survey data from Latino leaders, both male and female, broadly. This study on Latina high school principals highlights their personal leadership experiences through *platicas* and provides further evidence for Chicana Feminist Epistemology (Bernal, 1998) methodology that their experiences are different than that of men and White women.

The percentage of female Latina high school principals is small in comparison to their male and White counterparts and as such, our participants shared that being a female and Latina makes it difficult to be perceived as an effective and rational leader. Elena stated, "As a female Latina I am seen as being too emotional. If I made a decision they'd say, 'She's a bitch!' If I

[were] a man or a White woman, [they] wouldn't think that. [They] would just think [I] was a strong leader, so that double standard hits you in the face every single day." Not only is Elena's effectiveness questioned due to her race and gender, her emotions are also subjectively perceived as being too extreme. In addition to being questioned for being a "female Latina," Olga shares that she overcame "not being taken seriously" by educating herself on the "policies and rules," so that she can voice her opinion based on research at district meetings. These *testimonios* build upon the previous works guided by CRT, LatCrit, CFE, and Cultural Intuition as they represent both the overt discrimination and gender typecasting that Latina high school principals encounter in their roles.

In addition to confronting challenges based on their gender, Latina high school principals in this study also faced challenges based on their race as they advocated for the needs of their school community. Elena shares that when she advocates as a "female leader of color" for her students, her supervisors sometimes see her advocacy as complaints whereas they see her "Caucasian female counterpart as an advocate." Elena's experience in this study is a unique example of how her race plays a factor in how her advocacy is perceived by her White male supervisors whereas previous studies based on survey data (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015) did not provide specific examples. In addition, Eva shared a *testimonio* where she explicitly states that due to her gender and race, White parents questioned her decision to allow a student to return to campus after a serious offense:

I don't think parents would have come in if I would have been a male or White. I know it is because I'm a female of color. I feel that sometimes my families feel that women, Latina women, because we listen more, we will change our mind more and because of

that, they still try to come and kind of change our minds. But it's like "No," like "I actually know what I'm doing."

Eva's story highlights that although she was hired to be a high school leader and is capable of making appropriate decisions, several members of society discriminate women of color because they view them as ineffective leaders who are unable to make the correct decisions. Both Eva and Elena's narratives demonstrate Capper's (2015) Critical Race Theory tenet on the permanence of racism in education, in this case, the societal and district views on their leadership based on their race and gender.

Although this study focused primarily on gender and race, four of the Latina high school principals shared that they often were challenged due to their age. Laura stated that she's 33 and although her teachers respect her because of her contributions to the school community, she still has parents who "brush [her] off because [she is] so young." To address the challenge, Laura shared her personal background, research studies, and professional experiences. Eva also states that when she was younger she encountered resistance because she was "24 when [she] became an assistant principal. And 28 when [she] became a principal and looked really little so you added the fact that [she] was a female, Latina, then you add age, people just didn't take [her] seriously." In addition, Rosie shared that there was a group of older gentlemen who questioned her because she was a young Hispanic female," however, her 10 years of first-hand experience within her district provided her with the reputation that preceded her because she was a "workhorse and everyone knew [her] work ethic and professionalism." Rosie's experience demonstrates that although her district viewed her as an effective leader, staff continually questioned her efficacy as a principal due to her race, gender, and age. Though not a significant finding in this study, a future study that also looks at the age of Latina high school principals as a

barrier could further our understanding of their leadership and the support needed to be successful.

Finding 4: The Latina high school principals in this study identified the challenges of supervising employees whose actions are not aligned to the school's goals.

Due to their gender and race, most of Latina high school principals in this study (9 of 14) identified the challenge of supervising employees whose actions are not aligned to the school's goals as one of the biggest challenges in their role as Latina principals. In sum, these relationships at times created difficult work environments. Supervising staff is part of the principal's responsibilities and the participants in this study describe the challenges they encounter when they supervise educators who question their authority simply due to both their gender and race. Though principals are trained in supervising and monitoring staff, these trainings do not offer support for how to address employees who question their leadership due to their race. Furthermore, the guidelines tied to holding employees accountable based on their role can differ. To support them in addressing teachers and other assistant principals, the participants in this study relied on their social capital through the support of their mentors, peers, and eventually human resources.

Supervising Teachers

The participants shared that although they are often trained on holding teachers accountable, having an unyielding and/or confrontational employee can have adverse effects on the school community. Sara stated that learning to navigate the human resources process can be frustrating when an employee is not open to shifting their actions simply because they have no respect for their Latina leader.

Sometimes staff members don't have the same vision for the school culture you are trying to build, who don't agree with the culture you are trying to build, and what programs you are trying to build just because of who I am [a Latina principal]. And you are trying to be very supportive to help them be effective. [While] at the same time knowing when someone is just not a good fit for that school community.

Rosie shared a personal experience of an White male employee who bullied her by spreading rumors of her for three years causing mental and emotional distress which impacted both her personal and professional life. Rosie shared that was not sure if "he had an issue because [she] was a female or Latina or young or all of it." She eventually reached out to Human Resources and asked for support with the issue.

At Claudia's school, her teachers did not receive feedback from their previous male principal, thus, when Claudia began providing teachers with feedback, she encountered resistance and frustration from the staff, specifically the White teachers. Claudia reflected:

They're not used to getting feedback. They're like, "Oh, okay. Well, I don't think so. Like I was doing this." They'll tell me what they thought they were doing. I'm like, that's not what I saw... I think for me, that's difficult because they're not trying to change the things that they're doing.

Claudia's experience with her staff demonstrates the difficulty of shifting fixed instructional practices at a school that was previously run by a male who did not challenge the instructional program's ineffectiveness. Although she encountered pushback from the staff, specifically, the White teachers led by a White male, Claudia continues to provide her staff with feedback based on evidence because she believes that by "improving instruction, students will learn" and reach academic success in the predominantly Latino community where her school is situated.

Supervising Assistant Principals

To ensure academic success for their students, the Latina high school principals in this study shared the challenge of holding assistant principals accountable for their actions. Principals and assistant principals are expected to work as a collaborative team and have an aligned vision on how to support the goals of the school. Rarely, does a principal have to provide a fellow administrator with a disciplinary conference. In some cases the participating principals needed to hold members of their administration team accountable for not fulfilling their professional expectations resulting in a challenge for the principal because they are unlikely to be trained on how to hold fellow administrators accountable.

Roxana shared that working with her assistant principal has been difficult because the former principal at the school was a male and the assistant principal “probably feels that she can do the job better than me...The way that I address [her] is just by complimenting her by appreciating her work and at other times, having hard conversations with her.” Roxana understands the need of working together with her assistant principal and continues to greet her with respect even if she simply responds to her, “Not right now. I am busy right now.” After several conversations with her assistant principal, her assistant principal transferred to a different school to which Roxana states, “Maybe I was too honest with her, you know, for calling her out for the stuff she did.” Roxana’s experience demonstrates that sometimes holding an administrator accountable results in the individual transferring to a different school, yet, addressing the behavior of the assistant principal shows that Roxana wanted to promote a healthy working environment to ensure that both administrators were working in unison to support their staff and encourage student success.

Beatriz struggled with understanding why her White assistant principal did not support the school's positive academic and cultural trajectory. Beatriz reached out to her mentors to determine the right moment to shift from "coaching and helping, to holding her accountable as an administrator because that is not something that we get trained on." Beatriz stated that there were multiple incidents such as not completing an important staff evaluation on time or conducting instructional observations. Finally one of her mentors told her, "You are done coaching" and exhorted her:

Hold her accountable and enough of trying to coach that person. And that was really difficult for me, very challenging because while I do believe that overall, I have an amazing group of teachers and I had an amazing second assistant principal at that time.

We were headed in the right direction, but it almost felt like this very important piece was going in another direction.

Beatriz further shared that because the White employee did not put the students at the forefront of her work by simply completing the tasks she liked and ignoring her directives. As a result of the assistant principal's actions, not conducting regular classroom observations began to have a "detrimental impact to the instructional program." As a result, she recommended the employee not return to her school the following year.

These *testimonios* are unique to Latina principals in that in every example, the employees being referred to were either male, White, and/or had a previous supervisor who was male. They also demonstrate the lengths that participants attempted to work with and support the difficult staff member as a result of their familial capital and sense of uplifting and supporting one another instead of dismissing an employee. It was only after exhausting all forms of support that the participants ultimately asked for the individual to be transferred. Rosie's particular *testimonio*

highlights a discriminatory experience that caused mental distress and could ultimately dissuade other Latina principals from perusing and continuing in their role as high school leaders.

Research Question #3: What advice do Latina high school principals have for aspiring Latina principals?

Four findings emerged from the second *platica* when the Latina high school principals were asked to reflect on their own personal experiences to provide aspiring Latina high school principals with advice. Understanding that Latina high school principals account for a small percentage of all high school principals, the findings encompass both personal and professional aspects of the role.

Finding 5: The Latina high school principals in this study echo aspects of resistant capital as they advise aspiring Latina high school principals to fully know, understand, and communicate their “why” to their school community.

The Latina high school principals in this study echo aspects of resistant capital as they advise aspiring Latina high school principals to fully know, understand, and communicate their “why” to their school community. Resistant capital refers to communities of color understanding the inequities that exist and using their knowledge and skills to challenge them (Yosso, 2005). The participants know their school community and understand the challenges their students face as they also encountered them in their own academic trajectories (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). As high school principals, they understand and are constantly reminded by supervisors of their high school graduation rates and as such, they advocate for their schools to have adequate resources to ensure that all of their students are on track to meeting graduation requirements. As the participants shared what drives their work as high school principals, they encouraged aspiring

Latina principals to remember why they became leaders and to use their “why” to drive their decision-making as leaders.

The participants encouraged aspiring Latina high school principals to view themselves as change agents as they seek to transform educational systems that as CRT and LatCrit have identified, historically oppressed students of color, like themselves, in order to provide their students with equitable opportunities to be successful once they graduate high school (Gonzalez & Ortiz, 2009; Palacio, 2013). Olga shared that as a high school student, she earned several CTE certifications but was not on the college track, thus, when she began her tenure in her current role, she noticed that students were enrolled in non-A-G classes and in turn, she slowly “got rid of everything that was not A-G.” Olga tells aspiring Latina high school principals, “It is your duty as a principal to make these changes. You took on the job and you have to provide the students with the opportunity to be college-ready even if students don’t want to attend college.” Similarly, Sara, having experienced lack of preparation in her K-12 education, strives to provide students with the necessary tools and skills to be successful post-high school. Sara explained:

I want to change or improve and refine the educational systems in our schools, so that we can ensure that our kids get the highest quality instruction possible and it really revolves around providing Brown and Black children the instruction and education that they deserve. Growing up, I didn’t receive that. That’s why I didn’t do well the first year I was in college. I didn’t receive the instruction that I should have received, that I deserved. I feel like it was my right and I didn’t receive that and so now, my whole mission in life is really to provide that for students, specifically our students in our lower-income neighborhoods. If [lower-income neighborhoods] is where you want to work, then you have to be willing to advocate and provide our students with what they deserve.

Sara's *testimonio* about her personal educational experiences provides the reason why she advises aspiring Latina high school principals to advocate for systemic educational changes that will support students of color like herself. Linda, on the other hand, was provided with the academic support and resources needed to be successful because although she grew up in a poor neighborhood, she attended an affluent high school in a neighboring city. Now, as a principal, Linda strives to build a school that provides "the needed resources for the students to be successful even if [the school is] not in a rich neighborhood. All students deserve to succeed. And that is my job and your future job as a principal. You have to make sure all students are prepared."

Understanding the reason why she became a principal, Roxana shared that if a Latina aspires to become a high school principal, then it is important for them really understand and to "connect to their why- the why they want to [be a principal] because it is not just about moving up the ladder and in positions to earn more money. It is about doing the right thing for students, especially our all our students, our students of color, our English Learners, our discipline students to be successful," and to be "respected as the principal" by their community. Similarly, Claudia shared the importance of trusting their instinct and if "something doesn't feel right, then maybe it's okay to pursue it," even if it means to "rock the boat" and focus on the success of the students, especially those who are struggling, and not adult feelings. Claudia emphasizes the importance of principals prioritizing students when making decisions even if those decisions are not popular.

The participants affirmed that prioritizing students and addressing inequities as being essential to their role. Beatriz shared as she pointed at her heart:

You have to truly be in as part of your values. That has to include a love for kids, a love for the community, and passion for making a difference. And just knowing that in the end you have to do what's right. You have to do the best that you possibly can. If this is okay, meaning your core. And that's what I would talk with Jerry [my mentor] all the time. Our core has to be in the work. And that's what's going to drive you...Let that guide you to be student centered all the time. It can be difficult [to be] student centered all the time. Always continue to push yourself and hold yourself accountable.

Beatriz's *testimonio* demonstrates that sometimes doing what is right for students is not always popular, yet, as a principal, she has to remind herself that students are what matter. Sara also advised about the importance of maintaining students at the center of leadership decisions:

Make sure you're okay with asking questions and feel okay with pushing on systems that you know are not right for kids. You decided to be [a principal] because you wanted to make a difference, then you can't sit back when things are happening that are not right for kids. You have to feel confident enough to push on those things that you're seeing that are, you know, part of let's say systematic racism or you know, whatever it is, like you, you need to be okay with speaking up and be confident in that.

Sara speaks about the confidence in being able to do the work because as a female leader of color, one has to do what is right for students. Sara's vision, like the other Latina high school principals in this study, is aligned to resistant capital and transformation leadership principles because she is willing to challenge systemic inequities and structures of oppression that exist in education to ensure the academic success of all students by leading with vision and actions to address these systems (Bass, 1998; Yosso, 2005).

Finding 6: The Latina high school principals in this study attributed their success as principals to their social capital through mentorship and professional networks.

The Latina high school principals in this study attributed their success as principals to their social capital through mentorship and professional networks. Contrary to existing studies that discuss Latinas as lacking formal mentoring relationships or support networks that encourage professional success and the pursuit of the principal role (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015), the Latina high school participants in this study shared that they earned their current high school principal positions based on the support and motivation provided by the personal informal networks they created throughout their career trajectory (Lopez et al., 2006; Martinez et al., 2015; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Due to their experience, the participants of this study encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to proactively identify mentors and both personal and professional networks for support in their role because these supports are not embedded into their roles. This finding throws new light on existing studies that state that Latina leaders are unlikely to have professional mentors and/or be a part of a professional network.

Finding a Mentor for Guidance and Support

Most of the participants (10 out of 14) encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to find a mentor because they were encouraged to apply to school positions by former teachers, mentors, and supervisors. Beatriz shared that she originally intended to apply to her current school as a Spanish teacher; however, when she applied for the position, her middle school magnet coordinator hired her as a principal because “he remembered [her] at that time when [she] was young. That is why you, as an aspiring principal, have to identify a mentor.” Similarly, Claudia shares that she became an educator at the high school she graduated from because “one of [her] former teachers called and asked, ‘did you graduate already. Do you want

to come in for an interview?’ And I said, ‘Yes,’ just to be polite.” Now, Claudia is the principal at a neighboring school where her career began as a teacher and although she did not plan on becoming a teacher, she is “glad that [her] teacher encouraged [her] to apply. She is the reason I am now a principal so keep that in mind as you become an aspiring principal, start looking for a mentor.” Rosie recounted being hired as the principal of her current school by her mentors because she was the best fit for the position:

They asked me if I wanted to be the interim principal and I was hesitant because I just had a baby. They said they would be flexible and after a few months, they asked me to be the permanent principal because they could not find anyone they liked for the job. They wanted me to do it and although I was reluctant at first, here I am four years later.

Aspiring principals really need to maintain relationships with their former supervisors and mentors because those relationships might bring future opportunities.

Laura became the principal at her current school when her former principal and mentor, Mr. Chavez, was promoted. Laura shared that it is precisely Mr. Chavez’s support and that of her supervisor, Ruth, that allows her to be successful:

I want to say that my real mentor Mr. Chavez and that’s because I worked with him for like 10 years and so he's the person I go to when I’m like really in desperate need of real advice, not only because we have that kind of relationship, but also because, like he has that institutional knowledge of my school. There's really nothing that I’m going through that he hasn’t gone through himself right and then in terms of, like the other, the only other person I talked to about work or leadership is really just Ruth, our common director.

Laura's *testimonio* indicates that the principal role does not have to be a lonely experience where the principal solely makes decisions. She seeks advice from her mentors, in this case her former principal and supervisor, when it's necessary. Although Laura's mentors are limited to those who supervise her, she sees them as a resource for guidance in her role. In addition to previous supervisors, Sara also identified several mentors, beginning with a teacher she had as a middle school student:

Oh, I have so many. I mean I feel like my mentors are what helped me through everything like I mean gosh. Where do I start, I have a mentor from when I was a student so that are still my mentors you know, like Leila, I told you about the teacher who asked me to go to college, she's still one of my mentors she became a school administrator as well, and so she's always been somebody that I can call on and talk to. You know, and then the principals that I worked for so you know, Dr. Short, when she's always been an amazing person that I can go to that I learned a lot from. You know Ron, who was a principal. You know just over the years there's been so many mentors that are on speed dial on my phone.

Sara's experience with her mentors highlight that asking support from mentors is both positive and needed at times. Her mentors are able to guide her when needed and she does not feel alone in her role.

At times it is difficult for Latina principals to find female mentors due to the shortage of Latina principals and educational leaders, yet, the participants encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to reach out to potential mentors. Celia, a principal from Texas, stated that she aspires to be a superintendent; however, she is unsure as to what path to take to accomplish that feat. Celia shared that after attending a conference, she reached out to a presenter via Twitter:

I told her how much I appreciated what she said, and she reached out to me, she said hey if you're ever in this area, let me know we'll have lunch together. She tells the story of a boss of hers who helped her become a superintendent... That's what I want to do, and so [reaching out to her] was super awkward for me, because I don't like bothering people. But the fact that she was willing to reach out and say, "let me help you," was really neat so I started taking her up on it, but that made me think of when you posted what you did on Facebook.

Celia's story demonstrates how the feeling of uneasiness that most Latina principals feel when asking for help from others in educational systems that have historically marginalized them, as identified by CRT and LatCrit, yet, she was able to put herself outside of her comfort level and use her learned navigational skills to reach out for support. Similarly, due to Celia and I sharing a common race and profession, her willingness to support me in completing this study.

Understanding the benefits and supports that a mentor brings, Celia proactively contacts a potential mentor through social media and due to that experience, she responds to my social media request for study participants.

Two of the most experienced principals in the study had a similar experience on the difficulty of finding a mentor; yet, they encourage aspiring Latina principals to find one. Natalia shares that finding a mentor is difficult, yet, if she were able to do so, she would try to find "a mentor, preferably a woman of color. Someone who [I] can reach out to regardless of the situation [I] find [myself] to be in who can really help [me]." Similarly, Olga encourages her assistant principals to find a mentor who can guide them and support them when she is unavailable because she "did not have a mentor and knows how valuable a mentor can be when being an administrator." The participants who did not have a mentor, acknowledged the need for

a mentor as having a mentor in a male and White dominated role, can provide the needed guidance and support to overcome obstacles and challenges.

Being a Member of a Support Network

The Latina high school principals in this study encouraged aspiring Latina high school principals to identify a professional network that they can receive support and guidance. The majority of the participants (9 of 14) identified the importance collaboration in their work, specifically in supporting and encouraging one another as Latina high school principals due to the lack of formal structures that exist to support one another and the small number of Latinas that exist in the high school principal role (Lopez et al., 2006; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015).

Roxana shares that she is part of two informal administrator support groups, a secondary and an elementary group, who she can rely on for support in various aspects of her role. Roxana encourages aspiring Latina principals to surround themselves with the “smart kids” both as students and principals because it is the other principals who really help her in her role. Roxana states, “I text you and the others. You guys all help me when I don’t know what to do. I feel comfortable going to you guys [because] you don’t judge me. We help each other.” Roxana calls her elementary group “*Team Chingona Bosses*. We’ve been really close since 2010 and I know I can reach out to them at any time and they will be supportive.”

Also a part of a different informal professional group, Sara encourages aspiring Latina principals to find a group that they can go to for support as she does. Sara shares, “We had a group of principals that we’d call the *Original Divas*. They were elementary principals and they’re all women and every one of them, I can call on and I [do] call on quite a bit.” Claudia states that the formal networks she belongs to use effective protocols to “troubleshoot and help coach each other in [their] work and sometimes personal problems.” The participants rely on the

professional support groups created and formed by mostly women of color for guidance and support. Most importantly, these support groups demonstrate the need for women, specifically Latina women, to create their own networks who look like them and share common values as they provide each other with the trust and honesty needed to be successful.

Participants also encouraged participants to develop teams based on trust within their own schools to support one another to perform their jobs successfully. Carla shared that although she has two professors that she constantly speaks to with regards to education policy or her own moral dilemmas, she leans on the other administrators at her school site, “If I need help professionally, like what are we supposed to turn in, or how do you do that, we just lean on each other... [at other times] I just go to my staff and make decisions collectively.” Although Carla has a peer support group, she highlights that the only way to have a support group is to create one because “the district has no peer to peer model for support.” Beatriz shares that for work to get done at her school site, it must be completed collectively with teachers, office techs, and campus aides because “there is absolutely no way that you can get work done unless you work as a team and help each other out.” By being a part of these informal principal support groups, Latina high school principals not only encourage one another to continue their professional success but provide additional support to other Latina women who might have administrative credentials but who as Lopez (2018) identified have not pursued school leadership roles.

Even with the support of her peers, Beatriz advised that it is important to not only encourage one another as Latina leaders but to be able to provide support to our students:

I think we need to keep supporting each other, helping each other out so that we continue to offer opportunities to the young ladies who are watching [us]. Even those young girls at the high school that are watching you and watching me and like shit, “You made it. I

mean, I can too!”... And I think that’s what I just said. We did it. We’re going to help you.

Beatriz’s *testimonio* not only provides evidence for the importance of social capital through comradery of Latina principals but also the aspirational capital of students looking at us as examples of what is possible for them to achieve. Further, her choice of words includes me, the researcher, and that connection that is only capable of forming through the Chicana Feminist Epistemology Framework.

Unfortunately, though all participants shared that they’d advise aspiring Latina principals to become members of a professional network, three of the participants shared that it is difficult for them to trust others and have supportive relationships. Olga stated that the other high school principals in her network are “very competitive and don’t want to share their secrets to being successful with one another.” Olga’s *testimonio* demonstrates that as a principal, if one does not build relationships with others, they might feel isolated in their roles. Similarly, in her *testimonio*, Elena shared that her distrust of others stems from being “burned by people” for trusting them. Elena keeps her network small and although she’d like to have support from others, she is cautious who she trusts. Furthermore, Celia said that she “reached out to the Hispanic Organization in Texas but they never got back to me.” Celia attempted to increase her social capital; however, she is not sure why the organization did not respond to her request. Even with these experiences, all three participants agreed on the importance of having strong social capital as there is a need for a support network and mentor in their roles.

The Latina high school principals in this study encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to identify support networks because they are able to attain leadership roles by tapping into their own social networks similar to the “good ole boy” network that historically supported

White men in entering principal roles and excluded women and people of color (Martinez et al., 2015). They also provide examples of how both formal and informal professional networks support them in their roles. These participants encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to seek support from one another because that support will not be systematically provided for them.

Finding 7: The study highlighted that Latina high school principals understand the importance of familial capital through their own experiences as they promote parent engagement and create inclusive, culturally accessible, and compassionate schools.

The study highlighted through the use of CRT and LatCrit that Latina high school principals understand the importance of familial capital through their own experiences as they promote parent engagement and create inclusive, culturally accessible, and compassionate schools (Yosso, 2005). The participants encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to strengthen relationships between the school, students, and parents to create positive pre-college experiences.

Understanding the importance of creating positive school experiences where all stakeholders feel a sense of belonging, the participants encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to create an inclusive school environment that promotes academic achievement (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Carla explained that one of the most important aspects in her role is to develop a school family within her school community:

I want to make sure we're able to connect students emotionally again to the school because we have done such a good job of that. And I think that that's really vital, especially in a school with all boys, to have those connections. I think what's helped about being Latina is that the kids see me almost like a mom and when they get me mad,

they act like kids who want to make their mom happy. If I walk out of my office, all these kids are like, “ Miss we got your back.... We are sorry.” We feel like family... I’m at prom dancing Banda with my students... we dance, we play *Chente*. And we do all of that stuff, [because] it embodies who the students are [with their] culture and the music. As a principal, you have to be able to do that with your students. Build that family with them.

Carla’s *testimonio* highlight that familial relationships are necessary for anyone who is interested in becoming a high school principal. Through her personal and professional experience, she has effectively created a positive familial atmosphere at her school where her students view her as a mother and she in turn, uses that relationship to effectively support them. Carla builds on that family dynamic by being able to hold students accountable and using aspects of their common culture, in this case music, to celebrate their accomplishments.

Being able to build a family dynamic within a diverse school is necessary for a principal to be effective. Beatriz shares that her experience in living in diverse areas of the city allowed her to interact with individuals of various backgrounds and understand diverse cultures. As such, she encourages aspiring Latina high school principals to create a school where students see their school community as a family and have a sense of belonging. Beatriz asserted:

We’re going to continue to create a school and build a school that we would want for our own children. If it is not good enough for our own children, then it is not good enough for anyone. It’s that simple. Students are at the center. It’s important for a school to be a place where the kids have someone to support them. So we’re there to foster that. We are here to create that. Our students feel, hey, this is, this is my school.

Beatriz understands the importance of creating an inclusive school community with shared accountability that ensures student success and encourages aspiring Latina high school principals to create that structure in their schools. She reminds aspiring Latina high school principals to view their students as their own children and to use that as the drive to build a school that is adequate for all students even if it means transforming what is at the school. Similarly, Roxana treats her students as her “own children” and tells aspiring Latina principals to empower their families, “We’re not only working with students. We’re working with their families as well and the families that we service. We need to empower them.” As such, Roxana ensures that she provides students with a quality education and parents with a place where they can come for support as they work together to encourage student success.

Finding #8: The Latina high school principals in this study declared the need to have a balance between their personal and professional life to ensure success in their personal lives and their principal role.

Most of the participants (12 of 14) identified the need to have a balance between their professional and personal life to be successful leaders which at times conflicts with their personal lives and relationships. The role of a high school principal requires a large time commitment and dedication due to the extracurricular activities and at times, this commitment conflicts with their cultural expectations. In a previous study, Mendez-Morse et al. (2015) identifies the challenge of creating that balance between personal and professional for Latina leaders; however, the leaders in this study are aware of the need for this balance and advise aspiring Latina high school principals to actively create and plan for that balance themselves.

On occasion, it is difficult for principals to maintain a work and life balance due to their school being understaffed and the job expectations being overwhelming, yet, as a principal, one

has to come to an understanding that it's okay to still provide a balance between both worlds. Linda shares that "time management is big for me" because she often finds herself consumed by paperwork and emails. She reflects that sometimes she is exhausted and is unable to spend time with her family because she works "until 2 am" and so to address that obstacle, she has "learned to delegate more and be able to manage [her] time... It is not all going to get done. You have to be okay with that. The world isn't going to stop and there isn't an end. So you need to spend time with those you love." Sara stated that after transitioning from being an elementary school principal to a high school principal, she quickly learned the need to balance her time as she encountered conflict with her personal and professional life:

A challenge for me was just schedules and there's just so much going on in a large high school that you can be consumed by it. Balancing your life with a position like that is extremely challenging but you have to do it. It was like when I went off to college. As the youngest daughter, my Mexican father expected me to stay home and take care of him and my mother. But I didn't and I don't think he ever forgave me. As a high school principal, you know it definitely was a huge challenge to be able to still be there as a mother and a wife and balance that and still be a good, effective principal and school leader as well. It was a huge challenge that I don't think I ever really figured it out. It was difficult for my kids who wanted to see me and my partner who felt neglected.

Sara's *testimonio*, through the lens of Cultural Intuition, highlights the cultural expectation of familial capital and guilt that Latina high school principals encounter in their role because in Latino culture, it is expected that women prioritize their families over anything else and as principals, they feel as though they have to choose between their families and their profession due to the rigid cultural expectations and dominant societal gender roles held for Latina women

in the Latino community (Alemán Jr, 2009). However, she reminds aspiring Latina high school principals that they have to attempt to create that balance for themselves by not neglecting their familial obligations and still being able to be successful principals.

As a way of balancing their professional and personal lives, Latina high school principals shared that they needed to be cognizant of creating boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Claudia shared that she is “vigilant about not reading emails and not responding to texts to create an actual boundary.” Similarly, Beatriz shared that during her winter break, she is being intentional about getting rest and staying off her computer as she states, “This is my first Zoom meeting since the last day of school [a week ago]. So that really tells you that I have done anything and everything to stay off my computer as much as possible. I need to relax. As a principal, we need to learn that we need to relax and disconnect when we are not working.” Eva encouraged aspiring Latina high school principals to be intentional with their time off because as a leader, you set the tone for your school community.

You have to be able to use your time off.... From the time that you step into the school building you dictate how people feel right, so if you personally are not in a good place because you're tired. If you personally are not in a good place because you're overworking yourself, it's going to trickle down to your interactions and to the people around you. So, especially being in education, work can become so consuming that you also want to be a good role model for other people like yes there's a lot of work to do. But we always have to be able to find the time to say for today that's enough right, because we all know, this is a marathon, it's not a sprint.

Eva is aware of the need to balance her personal and professional time to be an effective leader. Even during our *platica*, she shared that as soon as we finished, she would be attending her

brother's birthday celebration because to her, "family comes first," a key element of familial capital. Her sentiment is a sentiment that is prominent amongst the Latino community.

Conclusion

An analysis of the current study through the lens of CRT, LatCrit, CFE, and Cultural Intuition revealed evidence that Latina high school principals' personal educational experiences, shape their leadership practice. Latina high school principals incorporated their personal capital under Community Cultural Wealth into their practice. The study emphasized the challenges encountered by specifically Latina high school principals. These challenges include addressing perceptions of their leadership based on the intersectionality of their gender and race and supervising an employee whose practices are not aligned to their school's goals. This study provided the participants with a venue to share advice for aspiring Latina principals, who focused on knowing and being able to communicate why they became principals, having social capital either through mentorship or professional networks for support, tapping into familial capital as they create inclusive schools, and ensuring a balance between their personal and professional life.

The findings reported in Chapter Four will be discussed in Chapter Five. It will also include recommendations for research, implications, and conclusions from the data analysis as it connects to research literature.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of my study was to examine how Latina High school principals embed aspects of Community Cultural Wealth into their practice, identify the barriers and supports they encounter, and to provide advice to aspiring Latina high school principals. Through two unstructured *platicas* with 14 participants, I gathered the participants' *testimonios* that led to a better understanding of how Latina high school principals use their personal experiences with various facets of Community Cultural Wealth to guide their practice. I also analyzed the findings through the lens of CRT, LatCrit, CFE, and Cultural Intuition as I highlighted the major barriers and supports encountered by Latina high school principals in a White and male dominated position. Last, I identified the advice that Latina high school principals provided aspiring Latina high school principals based on their experiences and journeys.

The results of this study add to the limited body of literature that focuses on Latina high school principals (Niño et al., 2017) in that it explicitly identifies how the participants implement the various forms of capital into their practice. It also confirms the previous research on the challenges these women encounter in their roles and the demands of the position (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Furthermore, this study highlighted the voices of Latina high school principals who are usually not included in existing literature through the lens of Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), Chicana Feminist Epistemology, and Cultural Intuition methodologies. Critical Race Theory in this study was used to analyze how forms of oppression due to race and gender appeared in the educational experiences of the Latina participants while also acknowledging aspects of LatCrit in the unique ways they experience immigration status, language, culture, and ethnicity. Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Cultural Intuition served as the lens to highlight both race and gender in the Latina principals' *testimonios*. Due to being a

Latina high school principal myself, I was able to incorporate Chicana Feminist Epistemology and Cultural Intuition as I, the researcher, interviewed the participants, created virtual bonds with them through our shared experiences and understandings of our gender, race, and profession, and made sense of their *testimonios* by reflecting on my own beliefs, understandings, and politics as I coded and interpreted the participants' responses. Most importantly, the participants of this study provide aspiring Latina high school principals with valuable advice in their pursuit of the high school principal role.

In this chapter, I discuss the key findings and explain the study's significance. I will conclude by sharing the limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

Discussion

Research Question #1

Research question one sought to understand how Latina high school principals incorporate Community Cultural Wealth into their leadership practice. The participants in this study gave significant insight into how their personal experiences based on their gender, race, and at times language, impacted their leadership. Their *testimonios* revealed further evidence that Latina high school principals not only improve the academic outcome of their schools (Leithwood & Janzi, 2008) but also their ability to use Community Cultural Wealth to foster stronger relationships between the school and the community (Yosso, 2005). Most importantly, the participants expressed the need to value and use the varying forms of capital, specifically navigational, aspirational, and linguistic capital, in successfully leading schools (Yosso, 2005). The study extends previous research in that the participants specifically connected their personal navigational, aspirational, and linguistic capital in their leadership decisions and priorities as well

as their view on the importance of challenging the White and male dominated high school principal realm.

Finding #1: This study showed that Latina high school principals highlighted navigational capital and brought their own lived navigational experiences to bear on their leadership choices.

Although previous research studied how Latina principals used their navigational capital to reach academic achievement and obtain their principal roles, this study examined personal rather than institutional navigational experiences in their leadership roles (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Navigational capital refers to one's ability to use social programs, in this case educational institutions, that were not originally designed for people of color (Yosso, 2005). In this study, navigational capital was highlighted as lived not institutional experiences. Through the lens of CRT and LatCrit, these principals held their personal experiences in mind by explicitly teaching and communicating navigational tools to their school community through culturally responsive leadership as a form to challenge racist norm that exists in the public school setting.

Finding #2: The study showed that Latina high school principals use their race, linguistic capital, and aspirational capital to develop and deepen their relationships with their students.

Previous studies suggest that when a principal's ethnicity and language mirrors that of their students, higher student success may occur. Principals take their own schooling experiences to construct their identity as principals, inspiring their students to see what is attainable (Capper, 2015; Mendez-Morse, 2016; Murakami et al, 2016). Using the lens of CRT and LatCrit, these Latina high school principals confirmed previous studies as they elaborated on how they use their language and race to deepen their connections with their school community to validate and empower them as a form to challenge the White norm. Several of the participants grew up in the

community the school they lead is located in and are seen as “one of their own.” The participants share their *testimonios* as a form of aspirational capital to build a bridge between the community and school to motivate students to reach academic success and to no longer see the school as a form of oppression but as a tool to challenge the dominant White majority. This study furthers previous studies in that the Latina high school principals share their personal *testimonios* on how they are able to connect with their students by communicating their shared living experiences and providing them with the necessary support to navigate the educational system and be successful. Some of these resources include the supports they benefited from or wished they had as high school students but which did not receive due to the racism that exists in education.

As with earlier studies, the participants in this study are aware that they are viewed as role models by the school community, and they use that understanding and their linguistic capital to build deeper connections. Most of the participants speak Spanish, which is predominantly spoken by families in their school community, and use their linguistic capital to build relationships with their students and families, confirming findings from previous studies such as Mendez-Morse et al. (2015); however, in this study, the Latina high school principals not only use their linguistic capital to build relationships with students and families, they also celebrate the language and use it to create relationships with their staff. Latina principals can create a school environment founded on their connectedness through LatCrit by creating a culturally accessible and compassionate school through their use of linguistic and aspirational capital.

Research Question #2

Previous studies identified that Latina educators confront various forms of oppression such as cultural bias, typecasting, and gender inferiority as they pursue the principal role (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Hibbets, 2005; Magdaleno & Mendoza, 2006; Mendez-Morse, 2004;

Trujillo-Ball, 2003). This study sought to more specifically identify the barriers and examine the supports Latina high school principals encounter in their roles as principals. The results of this study as analyzed through CFE and Cultural Intuition highlighted two major barriers Latina high school principals encounter once in their role as principal and most importantly, built on previous studies as the participants identified the supports needed to address them.

Finding #4: The study affirmed that Latina high school principals' leadership efficacy is viewed by others based on their race and gender.

Previous studies demonstrated that women and minorities confront family and home responsibilities, gender-role stereotyping, overt discrimination, gender discrimination in hiring decisions, and hostile work environments as part of their journey towards the principal role (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Prior studies also identified race and gender as being an obstacle that Latina principals encounter; yet, they did not present ways to address these obstacles (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Similarly, using LatCrit, CFE, and Cultural Intuition to analyze their *testimonios*, the Latina high school principals in this study identified having to continuously prove themselves as effective leaders due to their efficacy being perceived by others based on the intersectionality of their gender and race; however, this study did not stop at identifying this barrier—it also provided the strategies necessary to address it.

Contrary to previous studies, this study highlighted the need to be well versed in educational research articles, instructional strategies, and data to be viewed as effective in their roles as Latina women. Participants also shared that they relied on their social capital, mentors, and support networks, to address these biases. Further, the interviewees highlighted the importance of advocating for their school's necessary resources—through the lens of CFE and Cultural Intuition, they as Latina women are often ignored by their supervisors or seen as too

confrontational. Yet, instead of remaining silent like in previous studies, these participants see themselves reflected in the communities they serve and will continue to address their school's inequities.

Finding 5: The Latina high school principals in this study identified the challenges of supervising employees whose actions are not aligned to the school's goals.

A key contribution this study makes is the detailing of causes for tensions related to supervision. Tied to the intersectionality of their gender and race, the Latina high school principals in this study confirmed known tensions in supervising an employee whose actions are not aligned to the school's goals and who as described by CRT tenet on the centrality of racism and intersectionality, simply don't respect them as principals due to their gender and race. A reason for this barrier, as identified by a previous study conducted by Mendez-Morse et al. (2015), is the lack of training and preparation provided to principals in the operational aspects of the role due to administrative programs lacking curriculum and materials for both women and students of color, and instead, creating programs that perpetrate the heteronormative White male present in school leadership roles. In this study, most participants shared that their administrative credentialing programs prepared them for the theoretical aspects of the position; however, their stories indicate that they were not sufficiently prepared to handle some of the day-to-day tasks. These include employee supervision, specifically, how to deal with individuals who might not respect them as leaders due to the intersectionality of their race and gender. In contrast to previous studies, the participants identified potential resources for addressing this barrier such as reaching out to their mentors, social networks, and ultimately Human Resources for guidance on addressing the individual.

Research Question #3

Limited existing research focuses on the professional trajectory of Latina principals; however, few studies have focused on the advice that current Latina high school principals have for aspiring Latina high school principals (Niño et al., 2017). Further, studies have demonstrated that Latina educators with administrative credentials continue to hold non-administrative positions (Montaño, 2016; Lopez, 2018; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015). Four major findings emerged from the third research question of this study which sought to identify advice current Latina high school principals have for aspiring Latina high school principals in hopes of encouraging and motivating them to pursue the high school principalship.

Finding 5: The Latina high school principals in this study echo aspects of resistant capital as they advise aspiring Latina high school principals to fully know, understand, and communicate their “why” to their school community.

First, principals advise aspiring Latina high school principals to understand the reason why they pursued the role of principal. According to the participants, Latina high school principals will constantly have to communicate that reason to their school community not only during their initial interviews, but also as they present their school goals and plans to various stakeholders. Interestingly, their reasons revealed aspects of resistant capital and transformational leadership due to their experiences being tied to CRT, LatCrit, and Chicana Feminist Epistemology. The Latina high school principals in this study, like in previous studies, go into the role to enact systemic changes (Bass, 1998; Mendez-Morse et al., 2005). Adding to previous studies, some of these changes are centered around equitable resources for their students and challenging their staff to engage students with culturally responsive curriculum.

Finding #6: The Latina high school principals in this study attributed their success as principals to their social capital through mentorship and professional networks.

Second, principals advise aspiring Latina high school principals to use their social capital, either mentor or professional network, to provide support during difficult situations. This study's evidence contradicts previous findings that state that Latina principals are unlikely to have mentors. In her study, Mendez-Morse (2004) found that Latinas identify mentors outside of the professional setting and these mentors mitigated the absence of formal, traditional mentoring relationships. Further, Mendez-Morse's research described a negative sentiment felt by Latina principals with assigned mentors due to being unable to connect with their experience due to their race and gender. Yet, the majority of the interviewees identified at least one professional mentor that guided them in their roles.

Previous studies found that male principals usually gain entry into the principal role through the "good-ole boy network." Similarly, in this study, the Latina interviewees gained entrance into the high school principal role through their mentor's support. Most importantly, this study reinforces the findings of previous studies conducted by Knoepal and Rinehart (2009) and Newton et al. (2003) that successful leaders have strong mentors and networks that at times provide them with resources and support as they pursue varying positions and/or make difficult choices and these Latina participants, demonstrated that they also have mentors and networks that allow them to also be successful leaders. However, instead of being provided with mentors and professional networks through educational institutions, the participants identified their own mentors and created their own networks of support.

Based on their gender and race, the participants advised aspiring Latina high school principals to work together as a collective to be successful. During the *platicas*, interviewees

made it clear that they are aware of the small number of Latina high school principals and the need to support one another to address the unique challenges encountered. When asked about Latina elementary school principals, one participant shared, “we are a different species at the high school level,” than other school principals and thus, it is vital to celebrate each other’s achievements and provide necessary support when needed. Even the findings from Mendez-Morse et al. (2015) were predominantly based on elementary principals. Thus, the high school participants in this study expressed the need for Latina high school principals who through CFE and Cultural Intuition need to work as a collective, create their own support networks, and use their social capital to encourage one another as they pursue higher educational leadership roles because their experiences are reflective of their gender, race, and position.

Finding #7: The study highlighted that Latina high school principals understand the importance of familial capital as they promote parent engagement and create inclusive, culturally accessible, and compassionate schools.

Third, the Latina high school principals in this study also encouraged the use of familial capital to promote parent engagement to create inclusive, culturally accessible, and compassionate schools for all members of the school community, including people of color. Previous research shows that Latina principals use their familial capital to better understand the communities they serve (Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Rodela et al., 2019; Yosso, 2005). In this study, the interviewees encourage aspiring Latina high school principals to use their familial capital as they create inclusive, culturally accessible, and compassionate schools. They provided *testimonios* of how their students view them as mother figures in both disciplinary and celebratory events. Most importantly, the participants in this study provide aspiring Latina high

school principals with the advice of not only building collaborative relationships with families to motivate student success, but also to empower and educate families.

Finding #8: The Latina high school principals in this study declared the need to have a balance between their personal and professional life to ensure success in their personal lives and their principal role.

Last, the Latina high school principals in this study identified the need to have a balance between their professional and personal life to be successful leaders, which at times conflicts with their personal lives and relationships. While such a balance is widely known and supported in research, specifically with gender, its significance is particularly poignant in this study. Through my use of Cultural Intuition, these Latina leaders detailed how they attempted to create this balance by still maintaining both their professional and cultural identity. This advice is key in that Latina women are expected through cultural obligations to be good daughters, wives, and mothers. The Latinas in this study understood these cultural expectations and described the need to balance their professional life with their personal life instead of choosing their personal over their careers. They agreed that being a high school principal requires an immense time commitment that sometimes makes them feel like terrible wives, daughters, and/or sisters. The feeling of guilt as though they have let down their families due to cultural expectations echoes a previous study conducted by Mendez-Morse (2004) where Latina leaders surveyed answered that they often feel that they have to lose part of their identity as they go against cultural gender expectations when attending college and eventually being successful principals. However, in this study, the participants are cognizant of that boundary and encourage each other and aspiring Latina high school principals to find that balance between their personal and professional lives while still maintaining that it is okay to challenge cultural norms.

Limitations

This specific qualitative study is focused in scope and although the problem can be studied across the country, the Latina population in the United States is not homogenous. The results of this study may be particular to the characteristics of the Latina population in this region. The study consists of 14 participants who are representatives of Latina high school principals and their lived and shared experiences might not reflect those experiences of the group as a whole. The results of this study could potentially be applied to female principals of other demographics. However, the use of the study's recommendations can be used by aspiring Latina high school principals and should be implemented by university K-12 administrator leadership programs with the awareness of the limited scope.

Implications for Future Research

Adding Methods of Study

This study used qualitative methods, which helped voice the experiences of Latina high school principals. Further studies could expand on these findings by adding a focus group session where the participants discuss the principle findings of the study. Also, adding a quantitative component, such as a survey instrument to be completed by a larger group of Latina principals would allow these research questions to be posed to a larger population of Latina across the state and country.

Future Studies

Although this study focused primarily on the experiences of Latina high school principals in Southern California, other studies can be done to analyze and compare the experiences of Latina high school principals across various communities. Additional studies can focus on comparing the *testimios* between Latina high school principals from urban, suburban, and rural

areas. One of the participants of this study, Celia, is from Texas and her experiences are similar to the ones described in the findings, an additional study can look at studies of Latina high school principals from communities with a large Latino student population and those from smaller Latino populations. Another study can focus on the experiences of other high school female principals of color to highlight their experiences and determine commonalities and differences that might exist across different races.

This study provided Latina high school principals with a voice in the research realm, it did not study the impact of Latina high school principals on the academic trajectory of the school they lead. A future study can look at whether being a Latina high school principal has an impact on graduation rates, language reclassification rates, state exams, and other data collected by the state to assess whether Latina high school principals have a positive impact on student academic achievement.

Another future study can look at how Latina high school principals use social media to build relationships with their school community. Though one of the participants explicitly stated that she used Instagram to post videos and connect with their students and another recommended the use of professional social media accounts to build their networks, 8 of the 14 participants also had professional social media accounts where they regularly communicated with their school community.

Last, previous studies show that the number of Latina leaders decreases the higher in rank their positions are, thus, a study that examines the career trajectories of Latina superintendents might provide insight as to the obstacles and supports they encountered. The study could also provide a roadmap for aspiring Latina superintendents to follow as they pursue superintendent positions.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Recommendations for School Leadership and Administration Programs

This study indicates several key recommendations for university school leadership and administration programs. Most of the participants (13 of 14) participated in a university school leadership administration program and they all agreed that although the program provided them with the theoretical frameworks to be effective leaders, however, the programs lacked providing them with practical experiences for the principal role. University programs should consider listening to the voices of these participants and structure school leadership programs based on the needs of their alumni—in this case, gender and race—to best prepare future school leaders by surveying alumni in principal roles to identify topics to discuss and learn about while in the leadership preparation. Furthermore, as described by the participants, mentors and support networks are key in being successful in their roles, thus, universities and school networks (public school districts and charter organizations) should consider implementing formal alumni or district networks that can support females of color pursuing leadership roles that are run by and for females of color.

Recommendations for Networks of Latina School Leaders

The study's participants communicated a sense of gratitude at the end of the *platicas*. They either thanked me because my questions allowed them to reflect on their leadership practices or because by asking them to participate in my study, they felt validated in their roles. Several participants brought up the idea of creating a community of practice for Latina high school leaders run by Latina leaders because although organizations exist for school administrators, most are run by individuals whose experiences are very different from their own experiences, even the Latino or Hispanic school administrator organizations. Now in the age of

social media and digital connectedness, creating a community of practice for Latina school leaders to discuss work situations or personal issues or even a venue to just sit and chat can prove beneficial for the future generations of Latina school leaders.

Personal Reflection

As a first-year Latina high school principal, I found this study to be extremely helpful as I lead my own school. I am the youngest and only Latina high school principal in the cluster that my school is situated in; thus, the stories shared by the participants connected with me on both a professional and personal level. I was able to use my Cultural Intuition in this study as I, a Latina high school principal, was able to meet Latinas in similar roles. Through our interactions, all the participants offered their support and provided insight to their best practices during our *platicas*. Several shared their personal numbers and offered to mentor me as I continue in my principal journey. Most importantly, the process of the study allowed me to feel connected to these *mujeres* and made the principal role less lonely and more manageable because I know that other *Latinas* are striving to improve our educational system. The insights that the participants offered into their practice reiterated the need for us as leaders to work collectively to enact systemic change for inequitable practices. I also discussed the possibility of creating a network for us, Latina high school principals, to connect, reflect, learn, and/or simply socialize with each other. Their experiences resonated with my own personal experiences of being viewed and judged based on my race, gender, and my age; however, instead of letting these experiences negatively impact my career and not seek out support from my mentors or colleagues, I have grown to develop a stronger voice and a reputation based on my creativity and efficacy as a leader.

APPENDIX A: PLATICA #1

The objectives of the first *platica* are the following:

- Obtain demographic information from the participant;
- Understand why the participant pursued a career in education;
- Establish the career trajectory of the participant;
- Discuss the article “Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth” by Tara Yosso;
- Gain insight as to how the participant communicates their school’s community (students, parents, and staff); and
- Understand their professional vision and philosophy.

APPENDIX B: PLATICA #2

The objectives of the second *platica* are the following:

- Gain an understanding of the participant's professional network;
- Identify if the participant has a mentor and if they do, who is that mentor;
- Allow the participant to share their biggest success as a principal;
- Provide the participant with the opportunity to share their biggest; challenges/struggles/barriers they encountered in their principal role and the skills and strategies they implemented to overcome them;
- Understand if participant's felt prepared for the principal role after completing the Principal Leadership institute; and
- Participants will provide advice for aspiring Latina high school principals.

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