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Sí se pudo y con tacones: Understanding the Racialized Barriers and Challenges that Empower the Goals of Latina School Administrators

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Sí se pudo y con tacones: Understanding the Racialized Barriers and Challenges that Empower the Goals of Latina School Administrators

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

in

Educational Leadership

by

Ana Arias

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      University of California San Diego

            Professor Alan Daly

2024

The dissertation of Ana Arias is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and from for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

California State University, San Marcos

2024

Dedication

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my family, particularly my three amazing kids Tatiana, Ariana, and Marco Antonio, who are my greatest inspiration and motivation. It wasn't easy juggling my academic demands with my other professional and personal responsibilities. Still, I knew that by pursuing my goal, I was setting a powerful example for my three children.

Family- Thank you for the support, and for being patient and understanding when I needed time and space to write.

Tati, Ari, and Marco Antonio- As I crossed the finish line, I not only achieved a personal milestone, but I hope I instilled in you the belief that any dream is attainable with dedication and hard work. Despite the struggles I have faced as a first-gen Latina, I am grateful that you haven't had to experience the same challenges but hope you understand the importance of perseverance, and strength, while always acknowledging and respecting our roots, and where we come from. Keep that close to your heart, *ahora y siempre*.

Although my mom doesn't understand what this accomplishment means or what it means to earn a doctorate, I know she's proud of me. *También* Amá would have been proud.

Lastly, to all the *morenas* whose struggles mirror my own. *¡Sí se pudo, y con tacones!*

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Vita

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sí se pudo y con tacones: Understanding the Racialized Barriers and Challenges that Empower
the Goals of Latina School Administrators

by

Ana Arias

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California San Diego, 2024

California State University, San Marcos, 2024

Professor Ana M. Hernández, Chair

For Latina school administrators, the movement through the principal pipeline is not

easy, as many encounter discrimination and biases rooted in their gender, ethnicity and other

intersecting identities. Schools should leverage Latina administrators' cultural knowledge,

perspectives, and experience to improve student educational outcomes. A Latina administrator brings these prior experiences to the work and can better understand and support the needs of the growing Latino/a population (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Elizondo, 2005; Magdaleno, 2006; Méndez-Morse, 2004; Méndez-Morse, & Byrne-Jiménez, 2016; Murakami, Hernandez, 2016; Rodríguez, Martínez, & Falle, 2015). The dissertation highlights four Latina administrators' personal and professional journeys as they navigated the principal pipeline through interviews. Through participant and mentor interviews, the researcher sought to uncover the challenges, triumphs, and support systems the Latinas faced during their trajectory. The dissertation highlights participant stories with the objective of understanding how they overcame challenges and barriers with mentorship support. Latina representation is crucial, yet Latinas are scarce in leadership roles (Bitterman et al., 2013). Importance must be placed on actively developing a diverse group of Latina administrators, to ensure school leaders are better equipped to understand and address the academic challenges and disparities faced by Latino/a students due to their shared cultural backgrounds and experiences. The framework for this dissertation, Latina/o Critical Race Theory, or LatCrit, (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), encompasses a range of social constructs such as racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression that exist within the lived experiences of Latino/a administrators. As LatCrit is explored, these four Latinas' experiences showcase how social constructs intersect with their individual journeys. The findings revealed that while the four Latinas navigated their pathways to the principalship, they found empowerment through mentorships. They drew strengths from their identity and their mentors, took on a *Sí se Puede* mindset and pursued their Calling, or *Vocación,* and became principals.

Keywords: Latino/a administrator, cultural identity, leadership, intersectionality

Chapter One: Introduction

Representation Matters - I learned this in my third month as the school principal. The 6th girls that were known for *causing trouble* made it a habit to seek me out daily on the playground to get to know me and ask me questions about being a principal. They informed me they *might* be interested in becoming principals one day. This did not seem unusual to me, but to their teachers and other staff members who knew them well and had been dealing with them, and their inappropriate school behavior for years, it was quite a shock. Most of the interactions between these girls and adults were conversations about fighting in the bathroom, disrespectful language, and bullying others. One can imagine the look on the staff members' faces, mainly White women, when I told them that the girls all wanted to become principals one day. This was a key moment for me as I felt my presence as a Latina administrator impacted Latina girls who saw themselves in me.

As a Latina administrator, I often leverage my unique set of skills and experiences in my professional practices. Although there is limited research on the influence Latina school administrators have on students and student achievement, the findings suggest that I'm not the only Latina administrator actively engaging with students, building positive relationships, resulting in a noticeable improvement in their behavior and attitude towards school. School leaders have a pivotal role in promoting equitable practices and creating inclusive environments where students, especially Latino/a students feel valued and are being supported academically as well as socially and emotionally. Hiring Latino/a school administrators is a way to disrupt practices and strategies that do not meet the needs of our diverse populations in schools, and in some cases, impede students from achieving success in schools. Although the pathway to

reaching a leadership position is not always straightforward, the rewards are endless, and students deserve it.

Context of the Study

The dearth of Latina administrators in K-12 educational settings can be viewed as a significant problem, particularly in states such as California where there are high numbers of Latino/a students (California Department of Education, 2021). The cultural knowledge and experiences Latina administrators possess are not being leveraged in leadership roles. This is a missed opportunity as Latina administrators can bring valuable insights and perspectives to their work. It is their unique perspectives and experiences to their leadership roles that can help schools better understand and address the needs of the Latino population (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Ochoa, 2007). Hiring Latina administrators can be a tangible step toward creating schools and school policies that better serve Latino students and their families (Rodríguez et al., 2015; Murakami et al., 2016). Given that current research suggests this correlation, what accounts for the small number of Latina leaders in the principal pipeline?

Statement of the Problem

Given the increasing population of Latino/a students in the United States, it is crucial to prioritize the diverse needs of Latinos/as in schools. The need for Latina administrators arises from the increased Latino/a population reaching 62.5 million in 2021, an increase from 50.5 million in 2010, according to the Pew Research Center (Mora, 2022). In California, the number of Latinos in California rose from 14.0 million in 2010 to 15.8 million in 2021 (Krogstad, 2022). Latina administrators bring with them their experiences and understanding of the needs of the Latino/a communities which helps inform their leadership practices and the decisions they make.

Although all stakeholders share a collaborative responsibility, the onus of meeting the diverse needs of students can fall on school and district leaders, which is why it is vital to be intentional when choosing school site leaders. The need is for these leaders across the educational pipeline to be able to accommodate cultural, linguistic, and historical connections foundational to Latino/a communities (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Murakami et al., 2016). With only 23% of Latinos age 25 and older, attaining a Bachelor's degree or higher (Pew Research, 2022) it is evident that something must be done in order to support a fast-growing population attain higher levels of education. To meet these challenges, leadership and policy work must be redesigned to meet the needs of marginalized communities (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

As leaders, Latina administrators play a pivotal role in today's diverse and evolving leadership landscape. Latina administrators bring a multifaceted approach to leadership that is shaped by their identity, their perspectives and their cultural wealth (Horak & Valle, 2016; Martínez-Morse et al., 2015; Yosso, 2005). They lead with different priorities. Latina administrators can help bridge the communication and cultural gaps between Latino/a individuals and school environments. At the site level, Latina administrators can also serve as role models and advocates for the students and families they serve; representation matters. As members of the same community, Latina administrators have a deep understanding of the cultural and linguistic barriers that students and families may face and are able to leverage their experiences and cultural knowledge to meet the needs of the Latino/a community. Despite the importance of Latina representation, there is a dearth of Latinas in leadership roles (Bitterman et al., 2013). Addressing this disparity requires efforts to support and promote Latinas in leadership positions.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This dissertation aims to examine and elucidate the personal and professional experiences of Latina school administrators, including the barriers they faced as they moved through the principal pipeline. The research highlights their stories with the objective of understanding how their leadership trajectory informs their leadership practices. It is these stories that provide a lens that is unique to Latina administrators as they navigated the racialized barriers and challenges they have found along their pathway. The framework for this study will be based on the five central elements of the Latina/o Critical Race Theory, or LatCrit, framework (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). These elements provide a foundation for the research as they are closely aligned with the research questions of the study. These five central elements will aide in analyzing and understanding the unique experiences of Latina administrators as they navigate racialized barriers and challenges, while leveraging supports from mentors to help empower them through their trajectory.

This study was guided by the following proposed overarching research question:

1. How do personal identities and authentic stories shape the leadership of Latina school administrators?

There are sub-questions that stem from the main inquiry:

2. How do Latina administrators overcome the workforce/home related barriers during their ascension to the principalship?

3. How do mentor interactions impact the leadership trajectory of the Latina administrators?

Preview of the Literature

For this chapter, the literature was divided into sections that cover various aspects of Latina administrators, which provided insight to their pathways as they navigated the administrative pipeline. The literature explored research that highlighted the strengths, contributions, and challenges of Latina administrators as they progress through their leadership trajectory with the potential of improving student achievement (Ross & Berger, 2009). Chapter two highlighted the barriers Latinas encounter when aspiring to become school administrators, including finding ways of incorporating their cultural identities into their leadership practices, lack of representation of Latinas in leadership roles, and gender stereotypes in a field dominated by White men (Fernandez et al., 2015). Furthermore, the literature explored the role of mentors and their importance in building strong support networks among Latina administrators. This review delved into their professional identities of Latinas in educational leadership and how they navigated the complexities of educational systems. The following key themes in the literature include: 1) Interconnectedness Between Latino/a Administrators, Teachers and Students (Cuevas, 2016; Murakami et al., 2016, Murakami et al., 2013), 2) Barriers Latinas Face in Educational Leadership (Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020), 3) The Importance Of Mentors and Support Systems (Magdaleno, 2006; Pierce, 2020), and 4) The Importance Of Professional Identity and Intersectionality Of Latina Leaders (Bordas, 2012; Murakami et al., 2018). The literature reviews conclude with the LatCrit framework as it recognizes the complexities and intersections within the context of the racial, cultural and gender identities of Latina administrators.

Preview of the Methodology and Theoretical Framework

A phenomenological study seeks to describe what commonalities participants share as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This type of study was used to better understand the experiences of the Latina administrators as they ascended into the principalship, and how these experiences included challenges they faced along their pathways, and how they relied on their mentors for guidance and support. The researcher collected interview data from each individual Latinas and their mentors and developed a compounded description of their trajectory describing "what" and "how" they experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

The data was acquired by using a combination of methods to gain an understanding of the participant's personal and professional experiences as site administrators. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the four Latina school administrators and the four mentors they named to gather in-depth insights. These interviews provided rich qualitative data that was analyzed, triangulated and aligned with the LatCrit Framework.

The theoretical framework used is LatCrit (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), which includes a range of social constructs, including racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression that are interwoven with the personal and professional experiences of Latina administrators. There are five central elements posited in the LatCrit Framework (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004): (a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective. As the focus shifts towards Latina administrators, the framework acknowledges and identifies patterns of oppressive practices as they navigated their way through their educational journeys.

Lat Crit pedagogy was used as a tool for promoting critical reflection as it closely engages with these issues in educational settings.

The theoretical framework was aligned to the data collected from the interviews as it helped align the study with the research design, using the Lat Crit tenets. It is a good match to the methodology and design as it helps to attain the identity of Latina administrators and emphasizes the experiences and perspectives of those who are impacted by systemic oppression. Through the use of this framework, the researcher was able to explore the dynamics and systemic inequities that impact Latina administrators, and their experiences in their educational workspaces. LatCrit can help center the voices and experiences of Latina administrators as way of understanding their identities and the challenges they face in their roles as leaders.

Significance of the Study

Latina administrators are far and few, yet they hold impactful roles in schools, especially in California where one in two children under the age of 18 are Latino/a (United States Census Bureau, 2018). Current research seems to indicate that there is a need to increase the number of Latino/a teachers and administrators to narrow the gap in representation between Latino/a leaders and Latino/a students (Nuñez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012; Ponjuan, 2011). Distinct perspectives and cultural life experiences are something valuable and insightful that Latino/a leaders bring to the table. There is a need to develop leaders across the educational pipeline to accommodate cultural, linguistic, and historical connections foundational to Latino/a communities (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

For Latina school administrators, the journey across the principal pipeline is often not an easy one, as along the way many encounter challenges such as discrimination and biases rooted in their gender, ethnicity and other intersecting identities. This study seeks to contribute to the

field of educational leadership by understanding the experiences of Latina school administrators, their intersectionality of culture and gender identities and how they overcame challenges as they ascended to the principalship. This is significant to the field because it will provide insights to the ways in which structural and cultural barriers impact the representation and advancement of Latina school administrators in educational leadership roles. It will also address the systemic barriers faced by Latina school administrators in their professional advancement. Hearing the stories of Latina school administrators can inform strategies to promote equity, diversity and inclusion, which can ultimately lead to effective educational outcomes for all students and an increase in student achievement.

Definition of Terms

Latino/a: The term refers to individuals who come from or have ancestry from Latina America, which includes countries such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other Spanish-speaking countries in Central and South America (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Administrator: According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), a school administrator is "an individual who serves as the chief executive officer of a school or schools, with responsibilities that may include curriculum development, teacher supervision, student discipline, community relations, and management of school resources" (NASSP, 202, p. 2).

Cultural identity: Cultural identity refers to the sense of belonging and attachment an individual has to a particular culture or group, as well as the ways in which that culture or group shapes and influences their beliefs, values, behaviors and worldview (Bennett, 2013).

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that recognizes the complexities between multiple categories such as race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability, and the ways in which these categories shape experiences of privilege and oppression (Carastathis, 2014).

Assumptions

The assumptions made in this study indicate that utilizing a phenomenological approach, along with data collection and interviews, will be effective in exploring the challenges and experiences of Latina administrators as they navigated the principal pipeline. Another assumption of this study is that the Latina administrators will provide truthful responses to the interview questions, as the researcher has taken measures to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of each participant.

Limitations

As a Latina administrator, I acknowledge that subjectivity is a limitation of this research. As a way of overcoming this limitation, it is important to focus on the research questions, the literature review and the framework. Keeping a critical and objective lens is pivotal in ensuring that my biases do not selectively emphasize certain findings. I will need to rely on guidance from my committee if I ever start noticing that my personal beliefs, attitudes or behaviors begin to influence the study outcomes unknowingly.

The small group sample size is also a limitation as it can limit the generalizability and reliability of the findings (Creswell, 2017). With such a small sample size, and specialized localities in Southern California, I will do my best to ensure that the results are representative of the regional population selected for the study.

Delimitations

The delimitations of the study are: 1) geographic location, focusing only on Southern California 2) types of institutions, participants are limited to Latina administrators in K-12 schools 3) years of experience, as the administrators participating in the study are required to have two years of administrative experience. Those who are not Latina with at least two years of experience in an administrative role is not eligible to participate in the study.

Conclusion

The underrepresentation of Latina administrators is an issue that must be addressed. Latina administrators bring with them valuable assets that can inform their leadership and decision-making practices, build cultural responsiveness, and shape school culture and climate. The importance of Latina administrators ties into LatCrit, as it examines the intersection of race, ethnicity, and social justice. It is important to advocate for and support the representation of Latina administrators in educational leadership positions to help support student success.

To explore the issue of underrepresentation of Latina administrators, and how they support student success, it is valuable to review the existing literature, including research around barriers, challenges and successes these educational leaders encounter.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Research has shown that student achievement can be positively impacted when students see themselves represented in adults within their learning spaces, such as their educators and administrators (Martínez & Martínez-Morse, 2021). In California, where according to the U.S. Census, the Latino/a population is 39.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) there exists an imbalance, as only 23% of site and district administrators identify as Latino/a, according to the California Department of Education (2019). This lack of representation among leadership roles is a problem, as it does not provide students with positive role models who can identify with their cultural backgrounds. To support Latino/a student achievement, research suggests the need for an ethnically diverse representation among leadership roles, particularly as the Latino/a student population continues to grow in California (Martínez & Martínez-Morse, 2021). To achieve this, there is a need to improve the teacher pipeline within the Latino/a community and create a pathway for Latino/a educators to become site and district administrators since research suggests that ethnic and linguistic identities of public school leaders matter (Martínez et al., 2020). More specifically, importance must be placed on actively developing a diverse group of Latino/a administrators, as they are better equipped to understand and address the academic challenges and disparities faced by Latino/a students due to their shared cultural backgrounds (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Elizondo, 2005; Magdaleno, 2006; Méndez-Morse, 2004; Méndez-Morse, & Byrne-Jiménez, 2016; Murakami, Hernandez, 2016; Rodríguez, Martínez, & Falle, 2015). In the book *Brown-Eyed Leaders of the Sun: A Portrait of Latina/o Educational Leaders* the authors state, "The future of Latino/a children in successfully merging into the workforce will depend on the early investment of school administration and educators in preparing these students"

(Hernandez & Murakami, 2016, p. 4). It is imperative to focus on the stories of Latino/a leaders and their influence on student success.

The National Latina/o Leadership Project (NLLP), founded in 2007, set out to gain insight into the connection between Latina/o leadership and the success of the Latina/o community by examining topics such as self-perception, organizational design, and cultural surroundings in which Latina/o leaders work. The NLLP recorded perspectives and experiences of Latino/a school leaders, including their leadership beliefs, succession plans, work experiences, goals, obstacles and achievements. Not only does this study investigate the relationship between Latino/a leadership and the success of the Latino/a community, but it specifically sheds light to the unique issues Latinas face in education, their contributions and their experiences in educational leadership, as this is due to the fact that the majority of the NLLP respondents were women (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). This fact highlights the significance of disseminating information related specifically to issues faced by Latinas in education, and particularly in their role as school principals. This begins with examining the landscape in which Latina administrators are a part of in California.

When exploring roles of school principals and assistant principals, research demonstrates a significant underrepresentation of Latina educators in administrative positions within K-12 educational settings in California, where 54.9% (3,381,198) of the student population is Latino/a (California Department of Education, 2021). As seen during the 2017-18 school year, only 4,100 (8.40%) Latina administrators were reported in California public schools by the California Department of Education (2018). As more Latinas move into administrative roles, the relationship between identity and leadership has become increasingly significant (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). This is a shift from literature that focused primarily on structural barriers

faced by Latina leaders, and less on identity formation and the ways in which they contribute to their leadership roles. By examining the ways in which Latina leaders form their identities, the perspective shifts to a more holistic and nuanced understanding of Latina leaders and their experiences, and their ability to impact change for students, in particular, Latino/a students and their families.

For this chapter, the review of the literature will be divided into four major sections. The first section will consist of research regarding the connection between Latino/a, teachers, and administrators. The research will also explore the leadership strengths, contributions, and challenges of Latina administrators as they progress through the principal pipeline. The second point discusses the specific barriers that Latinas encounter when trying to become school principals. These barriers include difficulties in incorporating their cultural identities into their leadership practices, a lack of representation of Latino/a educators in leadership positions and facing gender stereotypes in a field dominated by White men. Third, the research will provide a discussion of mentors and their roles in building strong support networks amongst Latina administrators. Lastly, this review will examine the intersectionality and professional identities of Latinas in education, and how they navigate the educational systems.

The Interconnectedness between Latino/a Administrators, Teachers, and Students

One of the biggest educational challenges in the United States is the persistent racial and ethnic disparities in educational achievement between Latino/a students and their peers. Schools have frequently failed to address the needs of Latino/a students, particularly those from families with mixed immigration status, low-income backgrounds, and who speak Spanish as their primary language at home (Cuevas, 2016; Murakami, et al., 2016; Murakami et al., 2013). As the student population in K-12 schools becomes increasingly diverse, while the teaching population

remains relatively homogeneous (Murakami et al., 2016), researchers are interested in the impact that culturally diverse leaders can have on students' school experiences. According to Bristol & Martin-Fernandez (2019), Latino/a teachers who have similar cultural backgrounds as their Latino/a students can create supportive learning environments that promote positive social and emotional development.

Administrators, not just teachers, also play a vital role in shaping students' experiences and outcomes. Studies have shown that Latino/a administrators use their personal and educational background to create inclusive and equitable environments for diverse student cultures (Martínez et al., 2016). The relationship between students, teachers and administrators is interconnected. Understanding the experiences of Latino/a leaders is crucial for comprehending their ability to bring about change for all students, particularly underserved Latino/a.

The Need for Increasing the Number of Latino/a Teachers

In the literature, findings suggest an added value to social and emotional development, in addition to educational performance for students of color when they have teachers of the same race/ethnicity (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Dee, 2004; Lynn, 2018; Milner, 2016).

In California, where the highest number of Latino/a student population, 55%, reside (California Department of Education, 2018), only approximately 18% of teachers share the same background as these students (California Department of Education, 2021). The 2018 data also demonstrates that in 2018, female teachers outnumber male teachers, with women making up 73% of the teaching profession, and only 20% of those females identifying as Latina (California Department of Education, 2018). The findings reinforce the notion that Latino/a educators do not reflect changing demographics. Historically, in U.S. schools the trend demonstrates the majority of teaching positions have been held by White, middle-class, female teachers (Bragg, 2007;

Frankenberg, 2009; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012).

Subsequently, the lack of Latino/a representation in teacher roles can raise a specific concern

when looking at young Latino/a students. Thus, the more Latino/a teachers young Latino/a

students encounter in their educational careers, the higher the college-going rate (Gándara et al.,

2013). Along similar lines, this suggests when there is a racial/ethnic minority match between

teachers and students, the outcomes affected are student achievement, course-taking patterns, and

discipline. It is Latino/a teachers who are equipped to support Latino/a students with their unique

needs (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Ochoa,

2007). Latino/a teachers can be seen as change agents. Ocasio (2014) contends, "In order to

create spaces where Latino students are growing up to pursue their dreams of higher education,

classrooms must be equipped with teachers who can relate to these students and serve as role

models on their journeys to success" (p. 244).

The low number of Latino/a teachers within the principal pipeline is indicative of the

bigger challenge, which maintains the notion that if the pool of K-12 teachers is predominantly

White, naturally, the pool of potential principals favors Whites due to its limited number of

Latino/a teachers (Gates et al., 2003). It is important to note that the proportion of Latino/a

administrators is not increasing along with the rise in the number of Latino/a students, and the

percentage of Latino/a administrators remains significantly lower compared to the percentage of

Latino/a students (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). This insight questions whether attaining a

leadership position is more difficult for those with an ethnic background considering the

principal pipeline begins with a teaching background (Murakami et al., 2018). Consequently,

Latino/a administrators do not mirror the Latino/a community, and representation is impactful as

site administrators can serve as a catalyst for addressing inequities. Diversifying the number of

teachers not only supports students' academic and social-emotional experiences (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Murakami, Valle, & Méndez-Morse, 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2015) but also creates diversity within the principal pipeline.

The Influence of Latino/a Site Administrators on Teachers and Students

Emerging from the findings of Crawford & Fuller (2017) is representational bureaucracy theory, which contends not only that a principal's race/ethnicity "influences the policies, procedures, and programs that affect teachers and students," (p.1173) but also confers benefits to minority students when there is ethnic congruence between students and administrators and teachers (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). In addition to Crawford & Fuller's research, other scholars (Grissom & Keiser, 2011) posit the notion that the identities of school leaders matter. Drawing on the work of Grissom and Keiser, (2011) there appears to be a correlation between non-White principals who match ethnically with teacher applicants, resulting in a higher probability of hiring teachers of the global majority. This suggests that having diverse leadership can influence hiring practices, which can lead to a more diverse teaching workforce. While the importance of hiring diverse teachers is widely acknowledged, studies have also highlighted the need for retention of such teachers. A growing body of research suggests that when a principal and teacher share the same racial/ethnic background, it leads to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover for teachers (Fairchild et al., 2012; Grissom & Keiser, 2011).

Moreover, this match can positively influence school policies, and cultural and procedural norms for students with similar backgrounds. Therefore, matching students and administrators by ethnicity is important for addressing achievement inequities. Conversely, the lack of Latino/a educators, including Latino/a leaders, can be viewed as one potential factor that

affects the underperformance of Latino/a students (López, 2003). Yet, the underrepresentation of Latino/a leaders is not the only factor affecting the performance of Latino/a students.

Other obstacles such as economic, developmental, language, parental participation, and cultural differences can also impact their academic achievement (Leon et al., 2011). Considering these various obstacles faced by Latino/a students, it is crucial to have Latino/a leaders who can use their own values and strengths to shape their interactions with students, families, teachers, and also the academic programs they develop (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Elizondo, 2005; Murakami et al., 2016; Rodríguez et al., 2015).

With this understanding, it is important to acknowledge that the presence of Latino/a administrators in leadership roles can positively impact students as they are better equipped to understand and relate to the cultural backgrounds and experiences of Latino/a students, as such resulting in improved outcomes for those students. It is clear that efforts to increase the representation of Latino/a administrators in leadership roles should be prioritized in order to improve outcomes for Latino/a students. Creating a culturally responsive environment in schools is crucial for the success of Latino/a students, and research shows that Latino/a principals play a vital role in achieving this goal (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). Research studies also suggest that Latino/a principals also impact Latino/a students by adopting and enacting school policies that promote a socially responsive school culture, one that is deemed beneficial for Latino/a students (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Meier, 1993; Murakami et al., 2016). This research highlights the importance of increasing the representation of Latino/a leaders in education. One potential solution could be to focus on educational administrative preparation programs in order to address the misalignment between students and administrators.

In reference to the disconnection between students and administrators, Sánchez et al. (2008) states,

> In nearly half of the states in the nation, 90 percent of the principals are White. Thus, it is safe to say that there are not enough principals of color, and the enrollment of prospective, minority principal candidates in educational preparation programs must become a high priority (p. 2).

Given the potential for Latino/a administrators to be more attuned to the academic needs and inequalities faced by Latino/a students due to their shared cultural backgrounds, it is essential to actively develop a pipeline of Latino/a administrators (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Elizondo, 2005; Magdaleno, 2006; Méndez-Morse, 2004; Murakami et al., 2016; Pedroza & Méndez- Morse, 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2015).

The proposed dissertation focuses specifically on Latina administrators and highlights the significance of their ethnicity and language identities in public schools. The wider body of research suggests that having a diverse workforce that mirrors the demographics of the student population can have a positive impact (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Murakami et al. 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2015; Sánchez et a., 2009). It is important to consider the role that Latina administrators play in bridging this gap and addressing the needs of their students.

In 2005, retired district superintendent and executive director of the California Latino Superintendents Association, Fernando Elizondo (2005) put forward the notion of hiring more bilingual teachers and educators in policy development positions and other high-level administrative roles in order to address the achievement gap among Latino/a students. Firstly, Elizondo (2005) reified the importance of recruiting and retaining qualified bilingual teachers as they have the greatest impact, and by the same token he also championed the recruitment of more "bilingual educators in policy positions and high-level administrative roles" (p. 22). It is crucial to identify the need for recruitment in universities and colleges early on. This approach

will not only establish a pipeline but also cultivate a cadre of Latino/a educators, including administrators, who can serve as role models for their students (Elizondo, 2005; Magdaleno, 2006). Magdaleno (2006) states "such leaders are most often perceived by Latina and Latino students as positive role models who represent their future" (p. 12). Latino/a administrators serving as public school leaders, struggle to ascend to and sustain higher level positions of school administration, and with the limited number of educational leader role models in leadership positions, there is a danger that the credibility of the education system may be diminished in the eyes of both the Latino/a educational leadership community and the vast number of students it serves (Magdaleno, 2006). Despite their contributions and potential, Latino/a administrators, particularly Latina administrators, face numerous challenges in ascending to and sustaining higher level positions in school administration.

The lack of representation of Latina administrators in leadership positions in public schools creates a barrier for Latina students to see themselves in these roles in the future. Without seeing Latina role models in these positions, the legitimacy of the educational system is called into questions, perpetuating obstacles Latina women face in climbing the educational ladder and reaching top leadership positions. The discussion in this theme alludes to the strong correlation between Latino/a students, teachers, and administrators. With the increased number of Latino/a students, attention must be placed on their educational demands in order to improve their academic performance. The sophisticated leadership techniques shown by Latino/a administrators are created by incorporating their personal identities to address the educational requirements of their Latino/a students. Although this may be true, the pathway to obtaining an administrative role is not an easy one. Within their leadership trajectory, it is not uncommon for Latinas to face (personal and professional) barriers as they ascend to the principalship.

Barriers Latina Women Face in Educational Leadership

The 2013 National Center of Education Statistics condition of education report cites 89,000 public school administrators in the U.S., with only 7% of those being Latino/a (Bitterman et al., 2013). Consideration must be placed upon ethnicity, as the Latino/a educational trajectory is stark and educational attainment can be a barrier in the principal pipeline journey. To begin with, the percentage of Latino/a adults in 2016 who did not complete high school was higher compared to adults in other ethnic groups (National Center of Education Statistics, 2016). In California, Latino/a students have the lowest educational success, with 37% of Latino/a not having a high school diploma (State of Higher Ed Latino/a Report, 2018). As for college, according to the Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey data, 62% of U.S. adults over 25 years old do not have a four-year college degree. Although Latino/a representation in higher education is growing, only 24 percent of Latino/a adults in the U.S. have obtained a college degree (Fain, 2020). Gándara (2015) shares "Latina youth are actually the least likely to attain a college degree" (p. 9). She further adds that part of the gap in educational attainment for Latinas can be attributed to poverty and social disadvantage (Gándara, 2015). If Latino/a students do not graduate high school and pursue college degrees, the pipeline will not have the ethnic diversity it seeks, mainly in the representation of Latina students in higher education.

Gender Inequity within Educational Leadership Roles

When examining the number of adults without college degrees, Latino/a adults (52%) attribute their lack of education to financial hardship (Pew Research Center, 2021). It is also important to note there is a significant discrepancy in academic achievement between Latinas and other women of color, which puts Latinas at the lowest level of educational attainment (Burciaga et al., 2010). Drawing parallels again, many of those who find their way to the

principal pipeline will need a teaching background, yet nationwide, only 8% of teachers are Latino/a (Murakami et al., 2018). Looking at California, specifically, of all public-school teachers in 2019, only 15% of them are Latinas. This is in contrast to the fact that in California, Latino/a students make up 54% of the student population, which is the largest percentage of students of color (California Department of Education, 2021). While women have traditionally occupied the role of classroom teacher, males are seen more in the role of educational leaders in public school systems (Spencer & Kochan, 2000), which can be construed as a barrier. Conversely, with such a high percentage of Latinos/as in California, representation within educational systems should mirror the population, yet, the small representation of Latina administrators could be attributed to these barriers, in addition to inequitable systems which may be keeping them from attaining higher education and principalships.

Racialization at the Root of Inequitable Systems

We can also posit that the low number of Latina representation in administrator roles may be related to inequitable systems. This includes systems which favor males or White candidates, with some Latina school leaders experiencing social isolation amongst other White administrators or struggling with the idea of needing to act White in order to successfully navigate the system in place (Martínez et al., 2020). This type of differentiation is not new. Discrimination and racism have been prevalent in the Latino/a culture, as the Latino/a community has historically been colonized and identified as "minorities," and as such, Latina leaders feel the need to develop a critical race consciousness as part of their identity (Bordas, 2001). While resilient Latinas find viable employment as administrators, they carry with them their experiences and challenges of racism, poverty, or financial hardship which they endured during their childhood (Rodela & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2020). That is to say, Latina administrators

can find themselves navigating the inequities and injustices associated with the many "-isms" they encounter within their careers.

Microaggressions and Assumptions about Latina Multifaceted Roles

The challenges associated with being a Latina administrator are not only limited to inequities and injustices, as experienced in the form of microaggressions, but can also be felt through sexism and low expectations due to stereotypical assumptions (Martínez et al., 2020). In their study, Martínez et al. (2020) found testimonios of Latina administrators to include barriers such as being stereotyped, underestimated, undervalued, and marginalized. Building on the facets of their identities, these leaders learned to persist, resist, advocate for themselves and draw on their cultural and linguistic assets in order to work towards eradicating systemic educational inequities (Martínez et al., 2020).

Scholars suggest that for some Latinas, drawing on their cultural lived experiences such as the ability to juggle family, work and school responsibilities drives them to pursue a better future (Shroyer et al., 2009). For working mothers, work and family are highly valued (Sultana, 2012). Job expectations go hand in hand with gender expectations and socialization which, for some women, become barriers as they understand that personal and professional demands and sacrifices must be made by women administrators (Bird & Rhoton, 2011). When these sacrifices and demands are not able to be fulfilled due to family, women often find themselves forgoing having children in favor of pursuing their careers (Rincón et al., 2017). By the same token, there are Latina women who persevere in their career paths and have learned to lean on their families for supports as they juggle work and family (Chioda, 2016). The fine dance between leading a school and maintaining a household and meeting the needs of the family is another obstacle and a salient concern woman in leadership face. Murakami-Ramalho (2009) discusses the work-life

balance between the dual obligations they face when trying to meet the expectations of a Latina mother, wife, or caregiver while fulfilling their work responsibilities. Not only are these Latinas enduring the challenges of work-life balance, but they can also find themselves facing other challenges such as gender and racial biases.

Biases Towards Latinas: Stereotyping and Raciolinguistic Perceptions

Issues of gender and racial biases have also surfaced throughout their careers. These gender stereotypes elicit the doubt that resides within those who question their ability to fulfill the responsibilities required of educational leaders (Morse et al., 2015; Murakami-Ramalho, 2009). Hernandez and Murakami (2016) describe minority women facing unique race or ethnic barriers and obstacles. Their research notes that throughout their careers, it is common for Latina leaders to be confronted with gender and racial biases. These stereotypes are a concern as others question their abilities to do the job, ergo preventing Latinas from climbing the educational ladder (Amancio, 2019; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016).

In the Latino/a culture, it is common to believe Latinas are silent (Martínez, 2017). Similarly, in instances when taking a culturally responsive approach and speaking out about equity issues, Latinas could be accused of falling into ethnic stereotypes as depicting an angry Latina (Rodelo & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2020). This feeling of being undermined also affects the decisions made in fear of being criticized or scrutinized. Culturally and linguistically diverse women in leadership positions contend with the double burden of being stereotyped by ethnicity and gender (Enomoto, Gardiner, & Grogan, 2000; Mendez-Morse, 2004; Murakami-Ramalho, 2009). To add to the feelings of carrying a double burden, another theme surfacing around the topic of barriers is the impact of internal barriers on Latino/a principals. These internal barriers can be detrimental and transpire when one's leadership capacity is questioned, career doubt

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occurs, and subsequently these ideations harm Latino/a principals (Fernandez et al., 2015). For Latinas, these internal barriers must be jettisoned.

In the book, *Brown-Eyed Leaders of the Sun: A Portrait of Latina/o Educational Leaders* (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016), the chapter on Latina school leaders emphasizes how their strong values towards family and community shape their interactions with parents, academic programs, hiring of teachers, and professional development. The Latina leaders in the study view themselves as role models, and as advocates for the community, highlighting the connection between their success and that of their students. In addition to viewing themselves as advocates and role models, Latina leaders also recognize the barriers they have faced and continue to overcome in their leadership roles. As Latina women traverse through the principal pipeline it is evidenced that they've stumbled across barriers. Despite a slight increase in the number of Latina elementary school leaders, Latina educators are still facing gender stereotypes and racial or ethnic bias. Gender discrimination remains a significant obstacle for Latinas seeking advancement to the position of school principal. (Fernández et al., 2015; Magdaleno, 2006; Méndez-Morse et al., 2015). In order to attract and retain highly skilled Latina women administrators, it is important to investigate other barriers they have encountered navigating the educational leadership route.

Lack of Representation in the Educational Workforce

The lack of representation of Latinas in administrative positions is a salient theme among scholars. This can be attributed to the low number of Latinas in higher education and in the teaching profession (Rodriguez et al., 2015). Inequitable systems which favor White males and tolerate gender and ethnic biases and stereotypes are another critical point to note. Lastly, the challenge of juggling the work-life balance demands is another roadblock in the principal

pipeline. The research suggests that the underrepresentation of Latinas in administrative positions is a complex issue that stems from various barriers including lack of representation in higher education and the teaching profession, inequitable systems, and balancing work-life demands (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Other hurdles Latinas face as they try to rise in a predominantly male world include the lack of Latina role models and the inability to tap into other networking systems that potentially provide support and resources to those climbing up the administrative pipeline trying to attain a seat at the table. Lack of Latino/a representation and formal mentoring in leadership roles is another barrier for those who are seeking administrative roles (Méndez-Morse, 2004).

The Importance of Mentors for Latinas Seeking Leadership Positions

It's been noted that support systems significantly impact a leader's educational career (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Méndez-Morse, 2004). Having mentors and support networks can be seen as catalysts as Latinas navigate their way through the principal pipeline. Fernandez et al. (2015) stress the importance of creating a principal pipeline that focuses on recruitment, mentoring, and networking programs and supports.

Support Systems and Mentoring Relationships

Consideration must be given to the presence of support systems such as role models and mentoring relationships, especially for Latina women administrators. Mentors and networks provide access to important knowledge as well as aid in establishing connections with decision-makers who fill leadership positions (Pierce, 2020). Mentoring can come in the form of professional structured support but can also be channeled by informal modes. It is important to acknowledge the significance of Latinas seeing examples of themselves in order to see positive role models, mentors, and advocates (Hurtado & Kamimura, 2003; Méndez-Morse, 2004).

Méndez-Morse (2004) examined individuals who serve as role models or mentors to educational leaders, and the impact they had on minority women administrators, and concluded that traditional mentoring was lacking among their participants. Mentors directly impacted and influenced Latina leaders to pursue a career in administration. The study indicated that in cases where Latina leaders did not have traditional mentoring relationships, they all referenced and described individuals they considered their (informal) mentors, including their mothers, as the ones who provided them with explicit guidance (Méndez-Morse, 2004). Participants in the study placed major significance on informal mentoring from their parents, specifically their mothers as having yielded them with explicit guidance and support, and providing these Latina leaders with lessons that could be applied to their leadership practices. The Latinas in this study viewed informal mentoring as highly impactful on their educational leadership. Méndez-Morse (2004) defined mentors as "someone who actively helps, supports or teaches someone else how to do a job so that she will succeed" (p. 565). In the study, role models were defined as "someone whose characteristics or traits another person would want to emulate" (Méndez-Morse, 2004, p. 565).

Whether or not these aspiring Latina leaders had mentors or role models, Latina leaders reflect upon their own personal awareness of their leadership skills and look towards their aspirations to influence others as reasons for seeking out administrative positions (Martínez et al., 2020). Latinas who aspire to move onto the principalship or superintendent pipeline can find themselves at a disadvantage without having access to other Latina mentors in these positions due to the fact that they are underrepresented in these arenas (Méndez-Morse, 2004). The study also concluded that when Latinas see themselves represented in leadership roles, they are more likely to pursue administrative positions (Méndez-Morse, 2004; Pierce, 2020). Increasing Latina representation in administrative roles can also create spaces for aspiring leaders to talk with other

educational leaders who are currently in administrative roles. There is high value in verbally sharing personal experiences amongst Latina women, especially between mentors and mentees. Pierce (2020) claims women leaders can make a difference to other Latinas by sharing their experiences and their perspectives through *testimonios* or narratives. The importance of representation in the role of mentor or role model is a central theme across studies related to Latina leaders. Latina mentors are able to provide insight and offer strategies to help them succeed (Espinoza, 2010). Listening to mentors' stories, as they describe their barriers and their struggles, allows other aspiring Latina leaders to learn from their experiences as they pursue leadership roles (Méndez-Morse, 2004; Pierce, 2020).

In his message, Magdaleno (2006) created a sense of urgency for Latino educational leaders to establish mentorships with others who share similar experiences. Magdaleno (2006) states, "there is a clear need to increase the number of Latina/o school leaders, and to provide mentors to help sustain their success in the job" (p. 12). Mentors and role models influence Latinas in their decisions to pursue leadership roles (Martínez-Morse et al., 2015; Pierce, 2020). Additionally, there are those Latina leaders who seek out the administrative path as they feel they have the competence and skills to improve education (Méndez-Morse, 2004). However, in response to the challenges they face, Latina leaders look for mentors or networking opportunities with other Latina leaders in the administrative pipeline (Martínez et al., 2020). Quilantan and Menchaca (2004) in their study, found that those who were successful in their career mobility were those superintendents who were mentored and networked with other professionals.

In addition to the connection among Latino/a administrators, parents also view these Latino/a leaders as role models and advocates for their students and for equity (Murakami et al., 2018). Research suggests Latino/a principals serve as role models for Latino/a students. To that

end, role modeling helps shape students' identities and strengthens their academic aspirations (Magdaleno, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2008).

The literature highlights the significance of having mentors in one's network for sharing experiences and strategies. In the absence of Latina mentors, some individuals draw on the lessons learned from informal mentors like their mothers. From a parent's point of view, Latina administrators serve as role models and advocates for Latino/a students. It is important to acknowledge the intersectionality between professional identity and ethnicity that these Latina leaders bring to the table, as they bring more than just serving as role models.

Professional Identity and Intersectionality of Latina Leaders

According to Dill and Zambrana (2009), intersectionality can be defined as a critical lens which examines race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and gender within structures of inequality. Latino/a leaders have the benefit of intersectionality and their multifaceted identities which directly shape their professional practices as they capitalize on their experiences and use them to inform their professional identity (Bordas, 2012; Murakami et al., 2018). As stated by Rodela et al. (2019), "As bilingual and bicultural individuals, Latino/a administrators are uniquely situated to address the needs of diversifying student populations in their districts" (p. 4). This highlights the importance of having diversity in leadership positions in education to better serve the needs of all students.

The Influence of Cultural Experiences to the Intersectionality of Latina Administrators

Murakami, Hernández, Valle, and Almager (2018) explore the intersectionality between their professional identities and ethnicity among Latino/a educational leaders. They ascertain that leaders can leverage their life experiences and use them to inform the development of their professional identities. According to Hernández et al., (2014), "Latina/o leaders who have a

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conscious understanding of their ethnic identity and incorporate this knowledge into their school

leadership practices provide educational insights into the academic needs of Latinas/os" (p.

572). Moreover, when it comes to Latina leaders, their experiences as women of color bring an

additional layer of perspectives and insights to the table.

In their research, Hernández, Murakami, and Quijada Cerecer (2014) found that cultural

background, lived experiences, and their interactions at school influence the leadership practices

of Latina principals. One notable aspect is the flexibility demonstrated by Latina principals in

adapting their leadership practices to meet the unique needs of their schools and student

populations. According to Bagula (2016), "Latinas must be flexible enough to constantly switch

between different cultural codes of conduct and languages" (p. 6). This flexibility allows Latina

leaders to leverage their identities in the work they do.

Complementary to this claim, the National Latina/o Leadership Project (NLLP) surveyed

Latino/a principals and assistant principals, primarily focusing on women, in order to research

Latina's experiences, career paths, and the role their cultural identity plays in their leadership

practices (Martínez-Morse et al., 2015; Murakami et al., 2018). The findings reveal Latino/a

school leaders addressed the issues of gender, race, and ethnicity as personal and professional

challenges which affected their leadership practices and the work they do with students of color.

Additionally, part of the work includes building strong relationships and school culture.

Culture-Centered Leadership Supports Hybrid Identities

Scholars like Bordas (2015) build on the fact that the Latino/a community is a people-

centered culture, focused on each other, and see this ideology as one which a Latino/a leader can

apply to schools as a way of building a cohesive culture. Bordas (2015) builds on the lived

Latino/a experiences in which many members make familial and community contributions at an

early age, and as a byproduct, acquire values such as cooperation, mutuality, and reciprocity. These contributions support Latino/a leaders' work through the complexities of education. In an effort to foster change and promote social justice for diverse student groups in schools, this type of culture-centered leadership can be viewed as significant (Murakami et al., 2018). Even though Latino/a school leaders potentially possess all or some of these characteristics mentioned above, based on the 2013 National Center of Education Studies condition of education report, Latino/a school administrators are still not largely represented in K-12 systems to the same extent as the student population with similar ethnic backgrounds. Latino/a educational leaders can use their own cultural capital as well as others to develop their professional identity as they negotiate their trajectory (Davis et al., 2005; Murakami et al., 2018).

As Latina school leaders navigate their way through the principal pipeline, they are met with the complexities of their multifaceted identities including traditional gender roles, which include cultural and societal expectations (Martínez et al., 2020). Within the dual nature of their identity, Latinas learn to toggle between their ethnic or cultural identity while acculturating to the dominant culture (Anzaldua, 1987; Bagula, 2016). Scholars suggest a hybrid identity surfaces as a byproduct of navigating between two cultures. This hybrid identity mirrors an ability to adapt, which is viewed as a positive leadership trait that is shared by K-12 principals who must be ready to make changes to meet the needs of their students (Anzaldua, 1987; Davis et al., 2005).

Cultural Capital and Community Wealth of Latina Leaders

Latino/a lived experiences enhance leadership practices and bring with them cultural capital to help inform their approach to leadership and the decisions they make (Horak & Valle, 2016; Martínez-Morse et al., 2015; Yosso, 2005). In the same way, these multiple identities not

only shape them as leaders but also "the nature of their leadership in relation to the population they serve" (Murakami et al., 2018, p. 1). Additionally, as part of their identity, bilingual Latina administrators are able to leverage their linguistic abilities as cultural capital which is an important asset when building and nurturing relationships with Latino/a families. According to Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Theory (2005), the linguistic capital Latinas bring with them allows them to intertwine their personal experiences with their communication skills which can be used to improve outcomes. Yosso's (2006) book, Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline, describes the cultural capital that Latinas possess. Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model (2005) includes: aspiration capital, linguistic capital, navigation capital, social capital, familial capital, and resistance capital. These strengths, talents, and experienced forms of capital are not mutually exclusive, or static, on the contrary, they build on one another (Yosso, 2006) and are prevalent among Latina administrators and their experiences.

To illustrate experiences, scholars agree it is important to understand one's self and how personal experiences influence identity (Murakami et al., 2018). Likewise, Mpungose (2010) examined leadership through a humanistic perspective and concluded school administrators pull from their experiences and professional knowledge in order to build their professional identities. By leveraging these experiences, Latino/a leaders are able to make more explicit connections to racism, or deficit thinking about families and communities when making systemic changes and truly leading for equity (Rodelo & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2019). It is this unique educational perspective which Latina leaders use to leverage their experiences as they find themselves seated amongst men and are able to use this dissonance to develop as professionals (Rodelo & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2020). Hernandez & Murakami (2016) specifically highlight Latina leaders'

strong family and community values and how these assets impact their interactions with parents and families, the development of academic programs, teachers they hire, and the professional development offered to their staff. The findings support the idea there is a correlation between the facets of Latino/a identities and their leadership practices and as such, should be leveraged when filling administrative roles. Leadership practices, leadership identity, and advocacy of Latino/a administrators are not only directly related to personal experiences but also directly impact the school and students they lead (Murakami et al., 2016).

Cultural Consciousness Leads to Equity: The Resiliency of Latina Administrators

Along the same vein, schooling experiences and racial/ethnic backgrounds are also part of the personal experiences which shape the leadership practices of Latino/a administrators. Thereby it is no surprise Latino/a educational leaders build on competencies such as language to build relationships and interact with students and parents, as they share a cultural identity (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). In addition to their personal identity, Latino/a leaders also recognize the importance of developing critical race and cultural consciousness, especially when working with diverse populations. Latinas, as leaders of color, offer diverse perspectives and contributions, and one way to embed this is through pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). These unique Latina perspectives counter the deficit thinking and racist ideologies that are ubiquitous across groups and communities of color (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Beyond their development of technical skills in administrative programs, consideration must also be given to the intersection between the experience's Latino/a administrators had as students and later becoming school leaders (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

When looking through an intersectionality framework, Martínez and Marquez (2020), identify the ways in which the intersectionality of Latina leaders is interconnected to professional

experiences, their development as school leaders, and how they navigate their way through educational policies and systemic inequities. Additionally, the intersectionality framework offers knowledge and reifies the importance of recruiting, preparing, and sustaining Latina leaders in equitable systems. Not only do Latina leaders carry with them unique experiences, challenges, and successes on their professional journey, but they also face many challenges, struggles, and successes such as embodied gender roles, expectations of motherhood, mentorship, racism, and sexism (Martínez et al., 2020).

Subsequently, as noted in the literature, it is these lived experiences of Latino/a leaders that can enrich and positively impact a school's culture. As identified by scholars, Latino/a youth often grow up contributing to their families and communities at an early age, which in turn fosters a notion of cooperation, reciprocity, and generosity (Murakami et al., 2018), all of which become a part of their personal identity. Bordas (2013) examines the pillars of Latino/a leadership and the relationship between Latino/a culture and leadership. These pillars include relationships amongst people, the notion of treating each other like *familia*, being generous and respectful, keeping one's word, and looking out for the welfare of the group and community. These pillars are embedded in Latino/a leaders, in addition to focusing on community success rather than individual achievement (Bordas, 2013).

These values, or elements of cultural wealth Latino/a leaders bring with them, serve other Latino/a leaders as assets when developing their leadership practices within the role of an administrator. It is the cultural wealth, their upbringing, and the potential connections Latino/a leaders possess which allow them to relate to the experiences of students of color (Murakami et al., 2018; Hernandez, 2022; Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). Scholars suggest that amongst Latino/a administrative leaders there is a direct correlation between their personal identity, their

professional identity, and the way they share a common upbringing, common language, culture, and how they see themselves as role models (Murakami et al., 2018). Research demonstrates the cultural wealth Latino/a leaders bring with them allows them to see themselves in the lives of their students of color and use the connection as capital in order to help improve the educational experiences of these students, especially as it relates to strength and resiliency, which consequently guides their leadership practices (Murakami et al., 2016).

An Approach to Equity

Rodelo and Rodríguez-Mojica (2020) provide the example of a Latino administrator who intentionally used his own personal experiences to guide his practices and drive his focus on equity. This particular administrator expanded his equity work beyond the traditional focus on only students from low-income backgrounds. His childhood experiences with migrant families influenced his decision to serve entire families in ways responsive to their cultures, linguistic abilities, and identities. This holds true for other Latino/a leaders as they leverage their own lived experiences in order to inform them of how to design their equity approach and the needs of their students of color and their families (Rodelo & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2020). This one specific example demonstrates the way Latino/a leaders promote inclusive environments and equitable outcomes. In contrast, this type of approach to equity gives non-Latino/a leaders a platform to criticize the leadership style of Latino/a leaders or question their programs and practices (Rodelo & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2020).

In summary of this section, we can gain a better understanding of how identity is fluid yet complex, as experiences intersect and are braided into the fabric of the multifaceted identity that Latinas garner. Through the lens of Latina administrators and their intersectionality, we can

identify some of their struggles and how they navigate their professional positions. According to Murakami et al. (2018),

> At the intersection of race and other professional identities, for example, an individual may attribute their experiences to a single category (gender), to a different category (race), or to many categories at once (language, gender, and race), which, in turn, shapes their perception of the experience. (p. 4)

At the intersectionality of ethnicity, class and other social categories not only limits access to administrative positions, but also impacts professional identity and opportunities for Latina administrators (Collins, 2000; Murakami et al., 2018).

Latina administrators play a critical role in the education sector, yet research on their experiences and leadership practices is limited. Despite their increasing presence in educational leadership positions, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities that Latina administrators face. Further research is needed to study the experiences of Latina administrators, including their leadership styles, decision-making processes, and the impact of their leadership on student outcomes.

In addition, there is a need to examine the cultural and linguistic competencies that Latina administrators bring to their leadership positions and the ways in which these competencies influence their leadership practices. Further investigation is needed to shed light on the experiences of Latina administrators and their leadership practices in order to inform policy and practice and to support the development of a more diverse and equitable educational leadership pipeline. Examining the perspectives of Latino/a administrators will reveal insight into their stories. The next section will include the Latino/a experience by examining Latina/o Critical Race Theory.

Theoretical Framework

The framework for this dissertation, Latina/o Critical Race Theory (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), includes an array of social constructs such as racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression that exist within the lived experiences of Latino/a administrators. Latina/o Critical Race Theory, or LatCrit, is an extension or subset of Critical Race Theory (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), or CRT, and not only focuses on the experiences of people of the global majority and how these constructs are pervasive within the struggles Latino/a administrators face, but also examines and explains the inequalities in the Latino/a population. Arising from legal studies (Valdes et al., 2002), CRT brings light to racism and oppressive systems based on White privilege and how this has affected people of the global majority (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Stovall, 2006). CRT is a framework for examining the ways in which race and racism interact with institutions and systems. It seeks to understand how racial power dynamics and systemic racism are perpetuated and how this impacts individuals and communities (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). In education, CRT is grounded in at least five tenets that shape its basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy: (a) the intercentricity of race and racism, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology, (c) the commitment to social justice, (c) the centrality of experiential knowledge, (d) the interdisciplinary perspective (Yosso et al., 2001). These tenets provide a framework for advocating for racial justice and challenging systemic racism. It offers a way to think about and address issues of race and racism in meaningful and transformative ways. By engaging in storytelling or counter-storytelling, a fundamental theme of CRT, the narratives of Latino/a administrators, their trajectories, and their struggles as they navigated the principal pipeline, can offer a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives in educational leadership. CRT challenges ideologies such as meritocracy and colorblindness which imply that

systems are built equitably and function similarly for all students (Huber, 2010). LatCrit, as a branch of CRT which sheds light on the unique experiences of the Latino/a population such as immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), and was used to analyze the data in this dissertation.

Latina/o Critical Race Theory – Theoretical Framework

There are five central elements posited in the LatCrit framework (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004): (a) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (b) the challenge to dominant ideology (c) the commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) the transdisciplinary perspective. As the attention turns to Latino/a administrators, the framework recognizes patterns of inequality through the examination of their educational experiences and the ways in which they have encountered oppressive structures and practices.

Element 1: The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with the other forms of subordination. Race and racism are endemic, permanent, and at the center of critical race analysis (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). In addition to these central constructs, there are other dimensions such as language, generation status, gender, sexuality, and class, all part of the Latino/a identity, with which race and racism intersect (Valdes, 1996). Villalpando (2004) states, "For Latinos, each of these dimensions of their identity can potentially elicit multiple forms of subordination, and each dimension can also be subjected to different forms of oppression" (p. 43) as each dimension does not work in isolation with one another. When Latina administrators experience forms of isolation in educational settings, the experiences are not necessarily only based on her ethnicity but can also be impacted by her treatment as a woman, her language proficiency, or her perceived immigrant generational status.

Element 2: The challenge to dominant ideology. LatCrit challenges traditional claims such as meritocracy, color blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). For example, LatCrit provides the lens through which educators can question false notions of meritocracy and equal opportunity in the hiring process of ethnically diverse administrators. This tenet of LatCrit is especially useful in examining the experiences of Latina administrators, as it helps shed light on the systemic barriers and biases that may limit their representation in leadership positions, despite their qualifications and abilities.

Element 3: The commitment to social justice. LatCrit is fundamentally committed to supporting the elimination of all forms of subordination as it works towards achieving social justice. Educational settings rooted in a social justice agenda can adopt practices that support the elimination of all forms of subordination based on race, gender, language, generation status, sexual preference, and class (Matsuda, 1996) and as such can increase Latina representation in school leadership roles.

Element 4: The centrality of experiential knowledge. LatCrit recognizes the importance of the experiential knowledge that Latino/a people possess, its legitimacy, and its criticality to understand racial inequalities. This framework views experiential knowledge as an asset, viewing lived experiences as a resource and source of strength. "At its most basic level, this tenet requires that Latinos not be viewed as deficient or disadvantaged because of their racial or ethnic identity, gender, class, immigration status, generation status, or language ability" (Villalpando, p. 46, 2004). The LatCirt tenet of valuing experiential knowledge supports the notion that Latina administrators can draw on the knowledge gained from their oral history, and lived experiences, and use their multifaceted identities to empower them as educational leaders.

Element 5: The transdisciplinary perspective. LatCrit challenges ahistoricism and insists that a historical lens must be used when analyzing policies and practices in order to fully comprehend how their history has affected Latinos and other diverse groups. This tenet calls for an awareness and understanding of the historical factors which have impacted the lives and educational experiences of the Latina/o population (Villalpando, 2004).

Using these constructs, one can gain a deeper understanding of the personal and professional experiences of Latina administrators, and how these experiences shape various aspects of their leadership, such as school culture, relationships, mentorships, hiring practices, and their approach to equity. LatCRT recognizes the strengths and resilience of Latino/a communities, including the leadership strengths of Latina administrators. It is also committed to social justice and aims to adopt practices which eliminate systemic barriers or structural inequalities which limit opportunities for Latinas (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001: Villalpando, 2004). By sharing their stories, Latina administrators can provide valuable insights into their strengths, and the unique challenges and barriers they face in their professional journeys. LatCRT's focus on dismantling systemic barriers and structural inequalities, underscores the importance of elevating the voices and experiences of Latina administrators. Providing a platform for Latina administrators to share their experiences is crucial in supporting their understanding and empowering them to succeed in their leadership roles.

To summarize the literature review, there is a need for more emphasis to be placed on Latina administrators and the crucial role they play in shaping experiences and outcomes of student achievement, particularly Latino/a students. Despite their important contributions, it is important to note the unique challenges and barriers they face as they navigate the principal pipeline, breaking down barriers and paving the way for other Latino/a teachers and

administrators. They bring lived experiences, and cultural knowledge to their roles, and can serve as role models and mentors for young Latino/a students, helping them see themselves in leadership roles and encouraging them to pursue their own goals and aspirations. Latina administrators work to create more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments for all students, recognizing the importance of representation and cultural competency. They are powerful voices for change as they bring unique perspectives and experiences to the leadership table and can work to address issues that disproportionately impact Latino/a students and communities. This dissertation uses LatCrit and its tenets (Solozarno & Bernal, 2001) as the guiding conceptual framework for the dissertation research. The following chapter will address the methodology of the study that augments the current research on Latina administrators and offers insight into the intricacies faced by Latina principals and the valuable contributions they make as educational leaders.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Latina administrators are an important and influential group within the education field, as they bring unique perspectives, experiences and strengths to leadership roles in schools and school districts. They can bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the table, which can help to create a more inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment for all students. These administrators often face significant barriers as they navigate the principal pipeline, including discrimination and bias based on their gender, ethnicity, and other intersecting identities. Having Latina administrators can also serve as a source of inspiration and role models for Latina students, who may not have many opportunities to see individuals who look like them in positions of leadership. Despite these challenges, Latina administrators have made significant contributions to education and have worked to create more inclusive and equitable schools for all students. Latina administrators can work to address the specific needs and challenges faced by Latina students, such as language barriers or socio-economic disparities. By advocating for and supporting these students, Latina administrators can help to close achievement gaps and ensure that all students can succeed.

The chapter begins by outlining the research questions and will reveal the unheard voices of Latina administrators as the researcher sought to attain an understanding of their unique experiences, challenges and perspectives as they learned to navigate their leadership trajectory with supports from mentoring relationships. Additionally, this study provides insight on their experiences to help the researcher understand the context in which Latina administrators face challenges and how they overcome barriers. Data collection includes semi-structured interviews with participants selected from the target population. Criteria for selection of participants will

also be a part of this chapter. Interview questions are included in the appendices with other materials. Finally, the limitations of the dissertation and the researcher's positionality are discussed in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The dissertation intends to document, examine and elucidate the lived experiences, including the barriers faced by four Latina elementary school administrators from distinct schools, with a K-12 grade level span as they ascended through the principal pipeline and four mentors who supported them in their trajectory. The research emphasizes the need to understand the challenges Latina administrators face in the leadership trajectory and how they found the strength to persevere. The researcher will utilize the five central elements posited in the LatCrit Framework (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004) as the theoretical framework: 1) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with the other forms of subordination, 2) the challenge to dominant ideology, 3) the commitment to social justice, 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and 5) the transdisciplinary perspective. These elements are aligned to the research questions in the study.

Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following proposed overarching research question:

1. How do personal identities and authentic stories shape the leadership of Latina school administrators?

There are sub-questions that stem from the main inquiry:

2. How do Latina administrators overcome the workforce/home related barriers during their ascension to the principalship?

3. How do mentor interactions impact the leadership trajectory of the Latina administrators?

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological research design was used for the dissertation research study (Creswell, 2017). Using a phenomenological research approach allowed the researcher to explore a topic in-depth, gathering detailed and nuanced insights that might be missed using other research methods. This type of qualitative report involved collecting a large amount of data in order to accurately depict the intricate nature of the phenomenon or process being studied (Creswell, 2017). This approach relied on semi-structured interviews and sought to gain a holistic view of the unique experiences of four Latina school administrators. Phenomenology encouraged introspection as it sought to uncover the meaning and significance of experiences (Selvi, 2008). Listening to the experiences of Latina school administrators was a valuable way of exploring how their identity as Latinas intersected with their leadership roles and how they navigated the complex interplay between these aspects of their lives.

The four administrators selected for the study are principals of K-12 schools in Southern California, who identify as Latinas. The study investigated phenomena that appears to be a gap in the literature review in relationship to Latina school administrators, including their cultural influence, how they leveraged their strengths and relied on mentors to persevere and overcome challenges. In order to capture their authentic stories, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants through Zoom. These interviews offered a deep understanding of how their lived experiences impacted their leadership roles and insights into their journey through the principal pipeline (see Appendix E).

In addition, four mentors, named by the Latina school administrator participants were also invited via email to participate in the study (see Appendix F). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the mentors (see Appendix H) who worked alongside the Latina administrators supporting them as they ascended their way to the principalship.

The phenomenological research study started with the participant interviews in June, following a successful defense and IRB approval. The process continued through summer 2023. After completion of the interviews, the researcher conducted the data analysis. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were uploaded and analyzed using Dedoose, a qualitative software program. The software helped the researcher identify recurring phrases and words, which allowed the researcher to develop categories that later were coded into themes. This phenomenological study analytically revealed the histories of the lived experiences, with the goal of attaining a more profound comprehension of the Latina school administrators' personal backgrounds and strengths (Husserl, 1970; Van Manen, 1990). Understanding the unique experiences of Latinas helped shed light on how they understand their own professional aspirations, circumvented challenges, and the strategies implemented as they navigated their ascension.

Before conducting the interviews, an email invitation was sent out to recruit potential participants - Latina school administrators. The email was sent to a prospective pool of local Latina school administrators who are currently principals in a K-12 setting in Southern California, have served as administrators for two years or more in public education, and identify as Latina, (see Appendix B). This appendix is the email to indicate an interest to participate in the study. Once email responses were sent to the researcher, participants for the study were

selected based on the criteria established (see Appendix B). Participants received a $15 Amazon gift card as an incentive for participation.

Once the final four Latina school administrators were selected, the researcher reached out to the mentors who were named by the administrators to participate in the study via a semi-structured interview (see Appendix F). The principal provided the researcher with a name of their mentor and their email. I offered a few dates for interviews and then conducted the interview once a date was agreed upon. Once the researcher received responses from the mentors, the researcher reached out and confirmed date and time. Mentor participants also received a $15 Amazon gift card as an incentive.

Participants

For this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling to seek out four Latina school administrators, and four mentors (one per administrator) whom the Latinas felt were impactful in their professional journey. This type of sampling is based on specific criteria with the goal of eliciting relevant valuable insights and information to address the research aim. The researcher requested names of Latina administrators from professional networks and professional colleagues. The pool of Latina administrators who met these criteria was small, therefore the researcher relied on the names given by colleagues in her professional networks. Latina school administrators are the focus since they are often underrepresented in leadership roles, they may have unique experiences and perspectives that differ from those of other administrators, and their work reflects their effort to promote social justice leadership (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Mendez-Morse et al., 2015; Murakami, et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2009). Choosing individuals who have undergone similar experiences ensures that meaningful data is gathered (Dibley et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022). The sample size of four administrators allowed for a

more nuanced and in-depth analysis of the data collected. To obtain preliminary data regarding the experiences of potential, an email was dispersed to administrators, individuals that were recommended by colleagues or acquaintances, who identify as Latina and met criteria. All selected participants in this study received individual confirmation to participate in the study with the attached consent form (see Appendix C). The consent forms included the researcher's contact information, including a phone number and email address in case the participant had questions or concerns. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants did not have any type of personal or professional relationship with the researcher in order to eliminate biases. Also, each participant's identity was protected from the other research participants to keep the anonymity and protection of human subjects.

The selection criteria for Latina school administrator participants were based on the following: a) California public school female principals or assistant principals who have served as administrators for a minimum of two years, b) female school administrators who identify as Hispanic or Latina, and c) individuals not known by the researcher. It is essential for participants to have a minimum of two years of administrative experience as a principal or assistant principal to draw from while sharing their accounts. To recruit participants, a digital flyer (see Appendix A) and recruitment email (see Appendix B) was circulated through diverse networks. Before data collection began, it was necessary to confirm that participants met the criteria for the study, then they were provided with a consent form (see Appendix C). Although the study required four administrators, the researcher built a list of six potential participants, in case any participants dropped out of the study before interviews began. In case the interest pool was larger than the number necessary for the study, the researcher narrowed it down to administrators in different sectors of Southern California to avoid a cluster of participants from the same communities, and

then selected the qualified participants from this smaller pool. If the situation would have required it, the researcher had the option to use methods of randomization to narrow the pool further.

Once the four Latina administrators were selected, the researcher obtained permission from the administrators to reach out to their mentors via email (see Appendix F) to request their willingness to be interviewed (see Appendix H) and provide a consent form (see Appendix G). One influential mentor for each Latina was selected based on input from Latina administrator. Availability to be interviewed during the summer determined which mentors were chosen to participate.

Data Collection Phases

The dissertation involved three phases of data collection and gathering (see Table 3.1). Through purposeful sampling, the initial phase involved selecting and inviting four Latina school administrators and a total of four mentors, as each Latina identified one mentor. Participants were be provided with a consent form through email and given time to ask the researcher questions pertaining to their role in the study prior to their participation (see Appendix C and Appendix F).

The second phase of data collection involved conducting a 45-60-minute semi-structured interview with each administrator, and mentor, separately, via a virtual platform (see Appendix E and Appendix H). The goal of the administrator interviews was for the researcher to gain insight into the experiences of Latina school administrators, particularly in terms of the challenges they may have faced in advancing through the principal/ principal pipeline, as well as to identify their leadership strengths, which helped them persevere. Similarly, the aim of the mentor interviews was to explore how they influenced and supported these Latina school administrators when they

faced challenges and obstacles along their journey to the principalship. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and then sent to participants, thus allowing them to review the transcripts and confirm the accuracy of the findings as part of the member-checking process. Moreover, when applicable, participants were prompted with additional inquiries related to the same interview questions to gather more comprehensive explanations, examples, or clarifications during each interview (Mertler, 2018).

The final phase involved coding, organizing and consolidating all data sources, detecting recurrent patterns and categories that conform to the tenets of LatCrit.

Table 3.1

Examining the Authentic Stories of Latina Administrators Research Plan

Timeframe	Methods	Purpose
Phase 1: June 2023 **Recruitment**	Approved IRB Flyer-Invitation to participate Email-Confirmation to participate	Approved study Consent Forms Sent
Phase 2: June 2023 **Data collection of participant strengths**	Semi-structured interviews with Principals and Mentors	Principals reflected on contributions and barriers encountered on their pathway to the Principalship in relation to their identity. Mentors reflected on the support and guidance they provided to the administrators
June-July 2023 **Transcriptions**	Researcher transcribed Principal interviews and sent transcripts	Confirmed/Clarified accuracy of participants' story through member check.
Phase 3: August 2023 **Thematic Coding**	Code transcribed interviews using qualitative coding software, (Dedoose)	Coded transcripts to develop themes

Data Collection

Data collection is a critical step in the research study. One 45–60-minute semi-structured interview (see Appendix G and Appendix H) took place with each participant. A virtual Zoom option was available as a way of reducing the barriers faced by the researcher in reaching out to participants in southern California, or in case there was a need to expand beyond to other parts of the state. Once the study received IRB approval, the researcher proceeded with the first phase and sent an invitational email to potential participants, followed by a second email to complete consent forms and provide an opportunity for inquiry about the study or their role (see Appendix C and Appendix F).

Phenomenology involves exploring the meaning behind one's own experiences and perceptions (Padilla-Diaz, 2015; Selvi, 2008). The interviews were formed by two overarching ideas: a) experiences related to the phenomenon, b) contexts or situations that influence or affect experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The interviews (see Appendix G and Appendix H) were designed with open-ended questions to elicit personal and authentic stories from Latina school administrators and their mentors.

The phenomenological research aimed at protecting the eight face-to-face interviews that were digitally recorded and transcribed. The researcher used her own computer that is password protected with double authentication. No one else has access to the interview data. The researcher used Dedoose, a web-based qualitative data analysis software to aid in storing and organizing interview data in a secure and structured manner. The researcher created and applied custom codes to the interview data, as a way of categorizing and labeling themes, patterns, and trends. Dedoose employs stringent security measures such as encrypted data transmission and

storage, in order to protect the confidentiality and integrity of the interview data. The researcher was able to analyze and interpret the interview data and uncovered meaningful insights.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research studies yield a wide range of data that can be quite diverse in nature, as it is in the form of narratives and can be comprised of observations and interviews (Mertler, 2018). The use of standardized instrumentation was limited in this study, with the researcher serving as the primary instrument. Through the semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to gather data on the Latina school administrators' and mentors' perceptions, with empathetic understanding, yet suspending or bracketing preconceived biases that the researcher may have regarding the topics discussed (Miles et al., 2014). After conducting the interviews, the ensuing step involved gathering the data, examining, and finding coding schemes to identify similarities and differences in their personal and professional experiences, with the aim of uncovering patterns that can be used to draw inferences. The experiences of the Latina school administrators were connected to LatCrit through a critical examination of the ways in which race, gender and power intersect in their experiences as they ascended into principal roles. By applying LatCrit lens to the experiences of Latina school administrators, and analyzing the data, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of how their experiences might have been shaped by broader societal and institutional factors related to race, language, ethnicity, and gender and if these factors impacted their leadership trajectory and how they reflect the community they serve (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). Lastly, the administrators' interview data was reviewed with the interview data from the mentors' interview analysis, which allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of Latina school administrators, their experiences, and their approach to overcoming barriers and challenges they faced throughout their professional

journeys. By combining and cross-referencing the findings from the various data sources, the

researcher obtained a multi-faceted perspective on the research questions, which lead to new

insights and conclusions.

Coding

Upon obtaining the interview transcripts, the researcher was tasked with the essential

process of transcription and coding. As a first step, the researcher transcribed, or converted the

interviews into written text, in order to prepare the transcribed data for coding. To gain a deep

understanding of the phenomena, the researcher used hand coding to initiate data analysis as a

way of identifying themes, patterns, and relationships. The coding process included having the

researcher familiarize themselves with the data as they read the transcripts, attached key words

or tags in order to retrieve these codes in the future (Miles et al., 2014). The list of codes

reflected the research questions and was used to code the data using Dedoose, a qualitative data

analysis software program. Once the coding scheme was set, assigning codes to the different

segments followed. The transcriptions were entered into Dedoose and the codes were assigned

and applied to the data. The researcher continuously reviewed and revised codes, added new

codes, merged similar codes, or refined code definitions to better capture the nuances of the data.

For instance, in examining the concept of identity among Latina school administrators, it is

possible to identify common themes emerging from words they used to describe their personal

identity. These themes revealed a prevalent pattern that is reflected in the mentor interviews. The

codes were systematically clustered and combined as a means of generating new themes and

categories. The clustering and combination of codes afforded the researchert the opportunity to

uncover hidden patterns and relationships in the data, leading to the discovery of novel themes

and categories that enhanced the understanding of the research questions. The process concluded

with the researcher analyzing the coded data in order to identify the patterns, themes and relationships that are relevant to the research questions (Saldaña, 2016) and how these themes have implications for schools with Latina administrators.

Validity and Reliability

The researcher took careful and systemic approaches to the research process in order to increase validity and reliability. Those of which included triangulating multiple sources of data including the interview transcripts and providing thick and rich descriptions of the context and findings, and the use of member checking by sharing the written transcripts with the participants and asking for their feedback to ensure they agree with the interpretation of their interviews before coding or analyzing data (Creswell, 2017).

The researcher used streamlined, consistent approaches to data collection, such as using standardized interview protocols with every participant, which increased the reliability of the data obtained. Examples of this include clear questions and standardized interviewing protocols applied to each individual the same way. The researcher also used Dedoose to manage and analyze the data as another way of increasing reliability and consistency of data coding and analysis. These strategies helped enhance the consistency and dependability of the findings and ensured the results were meaningful and trustworthy.

Positionality and Limitations

Positionality

  As a Latina administrator who has worked her way up from teacher to assistant principal and now principal, my positionality is shaped by my personal experiences and the unique lens through which I view the world. I was a classroom teacher for 20 years, many of those as a bilingual teacher and then a dual language teacher. My approach was always to build the relationships with my students' parents, in particular, those who were Latinos and were more comfortable speaking Spanish. When I left the classroom, I worked briefly as the Migrant Education coordinator in my district and taught students who were new to the country. Working with Migrant families and Newcomer students allowed me to provide language support, offer support with cultural adjustment, facilitate social integration, and support student achievement. Once again, as a first-generation Latina, daughter of migrant farmworkers, I found myself using my personal experiences to connect to these families and students. Shortly thereafter, I was promoted to assistant principal at a K-6 elementary school. During my four-year tenure at that school, I found that my cultural background and identity influenced the way I interacted and responded to the needs of my school community. I took a keen interest in my Spanish-speaking community and strived to create a safe and inclusive environment where students and families felt valued and heard.

As a Latina educational leader, I am committed to promoting equity and advocating for the needs of marginalized communities. As a site principal to a high need school, one where 78.7% of students fall into the socioeconomically disadvantaged category, 52.7% are English Learners, and 86.9% are Latinos (California Dashboard, 2022), I recognize the systemic barriers that exist in our educational system and strive to dismantle them through intentional decision-making and inclusive practices. I am dedicated to fostering a school culture that celebrates diversity and promotes cultural responsiveness. My journey to becoming a principal has been shaped by my personal and professional experiences, which are a part of my authentic story. It is these lived experiences that guide and inform the decisions I make as an administrator.

In the context of this dissertation, my experiences as a Latina principal provided me with unique insights and perspectives that I feel are powerful when advocating for marginalized communities, including Latino/a students and families, and advocating for policies and practices that promote equity and social justice. I am dedicated to actively listening to the authentic narratives of my participants, fellow Latina administrators, with the aim of amplifying their stories and highlighting the impact they have on promoting equity and positively influencing their school community.

As a Latina administrator, and former teacher, while I may personally relate to the participants, it was important for me to use a lens that avoids confirming, disconfirming, or passing judgment as a way of offering a more impartial and objective approach to the data analysis process. I was very intentional and cautious not to lead the participants with leading questions during interviews or data collection, as this can introduce bias and influence their responses, potentially compromising the validity of the research findings. Adopting an active listening stance and being mindful of my role as a listener, rather than an advocate or judge, can

help me to better understand the perspectives and experiences of the participants in an unbiased manner. It was important to approach research with an open mind without influencing or imposing my own preconceived notions or interpretations. Following the measures and protocols established for this research kept me focused on the purpose and research questions to reduce any preconceived bias that could have influenced the findings. Also, not knowing about the participants or their histories/experiences prior to the interviews assisted with maintaining an open mind that is free of bias.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this phenomenological research is subjectivity. Although I proceeded cautiously and with mindfulness, as a Latina school administrator, I recognize that my own biases and perspectives can influence the analysis and interpretation of the data, which can pose a potential weakness to the study. In conducting the research, I prioritized letting the research questions, literature review, and framework guide my approach, rather than allowing my personal experiences to influence any biases. I actively sought guidance from my committee chair and other committee members when I doubted or when I felt that I was swaying towards a particular direction. This enabled me to rely on a different set of critical lenses to maintain objectivity and ensured the research was conducted rigorously and without personal influence.

Phenomenological research typically involves a small sample size, which may not be representative of the larger population (Creswell, 2017). Due to the small group size and the range of participants within one geographical region generalizability is a limitation as the findings may not be generalizable to other groups, locations, or contexts.

Summary

      This methodological chapter outlines the research methods and procedures that were used when conducting the qualitative study about Latina school administrators. This phenomenological research approach aimed to understand the essence of the lived experiences from Latina administrators, and explored these experiences and their influence, and how they ascended into leadership roles in educational institutions. The study used purposeful sampling, and data collection involved in-depth interviews with participants to explore their journey through the administrative pipeline. These authentic stories of Latina school administrators, an underrepresented group in educational leadership, offers a deeper understanding of the barriers they have faced, the strategies they have used to overcome them, and the impact of their experiences on their personal and professional lives.

Chapter Four: Overview

The purpose of the study is to bring to the forefront the unique personal and professional experiences Latinas encountered as they navigated their way through the principal pipeline. Their presence is palpable, as research suggests that students' academic performance can improve when their teachers and administrators mirror their own identities (Martínez & Martínez-Morse, 2021). The journey to becoming a school administrator is not always an easy linear pathway, especially for Latinas who aspire to make a change in the lives of students and communities, particularly in California, where the number of Latino/a students is high (California Department of Education, 2021). Throughout their trajectory, former teachers turned administrators, encounter challenges, barriers, and systems that can employ some reconstruction. LatCrit provides a critical lens through which we see the obstacles and challenges Latina leaders face, which may limit their representation, yet through their tenacity and perseverance, the participants in the study were able to obtain principal roles, something not common amongst Latinas.

Although the number of Latina administrators is growing, there are only approximately 2% Latina administrators in California (California Department of Education, 2019). The need for representation among leadership roles is essential as research suggests that ethnic and linguistic identities of educational leaders matter (Martínez et al., 2020). Those leaders who can identify possess the ability to address academic challenges and inequalities experienced by Latino/a students, stemming from their shared cultural backgrounds (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Elizondo, 2005; Magdaleno, 2006; Méndez-Morse, 2004; Méndez-Morse, & Byrne-Jiménez, 2016; Murakami, Hernandez, 2016; Rodríguez, Martínez, & Falle, 2015).

With the increasing numbers of Latinas in administrative positions, the correlation between identity and leadership has gained significance (Hernandez & Murakami, 2016). It is these Latina women leading schools who can recount their experiences unique to their identity, their upbringing, their inner circles, and their existence as women of color. The stories Latina leaders share with us, allow us to better

understand not only how they were able to attain their positions of leadership but also shed light on how their multifaceted identity influences their initiatives, strategies, and approach to leadership. Hearing from Latina principals paints a narrative of a unique type of leadership, one that is rooted in a rich tapestry of cultural influence and resilience. Examining Latina leaders and their relationship between identity and how it contributes to their resilience in overcoming challenges and how that influences their leadership practices, which is a shift from the literature that primarily focuses on barriers faced by Latina educational leaders. The significance of this relationship continues to increase (Hernández & Murakami, 2016).

Following their capacity to persevere through obstacles, consideration must also be given to the importance of support systems, including role models and mentors. Mentors, whether formal or informal can provide access to knowledge as well as help establish connections with other decisionmakers in leadership roles (Pierce, 2020). Finding these mentorships or networks is vital as often Latinas in leadership roles find themselves at a disadvantage because of the lack of access to other Latina mentors stemming from the underrepresentation in these educational leadership roles (Méndez-Morse, 2004).

Voices and perspectives of Latina administrators are often underrepresented in literature, as the representative number of Latina administrators in the field of education is considerably low. Additionally, there is a gap in research exploring the factors that impact career advancement or trajectories and how they overcome barriers they face along the principal pipeline. Furthermore, a lack of understanding exists regarding how mentoring relationships and support networks contribute to the success and advancement of Latina administrators. Grasping a better conceptual understanding of these gaps can help inform educational practices that promote equity and could potentially improve student achievement (Magdaleno, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2008). Therefore, this study aims to explore the unique narratives of Latina administrators as they transcended into the principalship and analyze how their authentic identities and mentoring relationships facilitated their professional advancement. This chapter is organized as follows: Project Overview and Research Questions, Participant Overview, Discussion of the Findings, and Prevalent Themes.

Project Overview

The chapter will reveal the unheard voices of Latina administrators as the researcher seeks to attain an understanding of their unique experiences, challenges, and perspectives which supported them in pushing forward and persevering to acquire the role of principal. Additionally, this study will provide rich, nuanced insight of their experiences to help understand the context in which Latina administrators overcome challenges and barriers as they ascended to the principalship. Latina administrators play a crucial and influential role within the educational field, contributing unique perspectives and experiences to leadership positions in schools. The research emphasizes the need to understand the obstacles Latina administrators encounter along their leadership journey, how they persevered, and the impact of mentorships and their role in mitigating these challenges, ultimately aiming to inform effective leadership trajectories for Latina women. The project recounts the personal journeys and mentorships of four Latina administrators in this phenomenological study. Along their pathways they embraced the *sí se puede* attitude, were rooted in a mindset of determination and perseverance, and successfully transcended through adversity until they found themselves in the principal role.

The following overarching research question guided the research:

1. How do personal identities and authentic stories shape the leadership of Latina school administrators?

There are sub-questions that stem from the main inquiry:

2. How do Latina administrators overcome the workforce/home related barriers during their ascension to the principalship?

3. How do mentor interactions impact the leadership trajectory of the Latina
    administrators?

Participant Overview

Four Latinas were selected to share their journeys through interviews, sharing their obstacles, struggles and triumphs. The aim was to actively listen and understand their experiences, particularly noting how they did not give up. The four primary participants were Latina administrators who worked their way up through the principal pipeline, started their careers as classroom teachers and ended up in the role of school principal. Two participants were elementary school administrators, one was a high school administrator and the fourth worked as a site principal in both elementary and high school. As part of the interview process, the administrators were each asked to name a mentor whom they considered to have had an impact on them during their principalship trajectory. These four mentors, or secondary participants, were also interviewed by the researcher. The following section begins by providing background information about the primary participants – Latina administrators, and then followed by providing details about the mentors, or secondary participants.

Administrators in the Study

Mina

Mina (Admin) has been a long-time Latina educator and leader in southern California, serving a total of 27 years in the same community. Her career expanded from elementary and middle school teaching experiences to a two-year assistant principalship that led her to furthering her career as a principal for ten years. She served as an administrator within the same school district, working between different school sites. The school she last led was in a highly diverse area within the fourth-most populous county in California which had an urban demographics of

81% of students falling into the low-socioeconomic level, with 22% English Learners, and 83% Hispanic or Latino overall population. Mina (Admin) never thought of herself progressing into the trajectory of a principalship, thus perceiving her end goal as an assistant principal. However, the influence of her mentor made a difference in her career decisions coupled with her belief that Latina representation mattered. Since she always saw her goal as a means to support her community, it was not surprising to learn why she had always stayed and worked in her community.

Gabriela

Gabriela (Admin) leads a school in the heart of Orange County. Having grown up in the same area where she has spent her entire professional career, she is a pilar in the community, a very well-known and well-respected Latina leader. Her journey to get here was a long one. Before tapping into administration, Gabriela (Admin) spent eight years as a dedicated history teacher at her alma mater, and water polo and swim coach. She championed for and created a girls water polo team. Being a part of a leadership team who lead the school through an accreditation coupled with her experience leading teams as department leader and coach, gave her the confidence to consider administration, although when she went into teaching never harbored aspirations for leadership. Despite her initial reservations, Gabriela (Admin) embraced her leadership role as she felt constant support from those who believed in her, including her mentors and family. Gabriela (Admin) spent eight and a half years as an assistant principal, and six years as a principal. Her school reflects diversity along with some challenges: 65% of students fall under the low socioeconomically disadvantaged group, with 14% identifying as English Learners, and 67% falling in the Hispanic or Latino subgroup. As a Latina high school

principal, Gabriela (Admin) stands tall as a source of inspiration, cognizant of her positionality and the importance of being a role model to those she works with and serves.

Ximena

Ximena's (Admin) journey through education has been a varied path, always being guided by heart. As an English Learner herself, having immigrated to the United States from Mexico at a young age, she has always been cognizant of the influence language and culture have in shaping educational experiences. She drew upon this knowledge to inform her decisions as the principal of a school which was comprised of 80% of students classified as low socioeconomically disadvantaged, 35% designated as English Learners, and 85% categorized as Hispanic or Latino. Ximena's dedication and passion for English Learners and Dual Language education propelled her forward. Ximena (Admin) has a broad range of experiences, ranging from paraprofessional, middle school teacher, high school teacher, to assistant principal, principal, central office director, and coordinator at the district office. She attributes her trajectory to the influence of others who helped shape her professional career pathway, consistently presenting opportunities that she felt compelled to pursue. Ximena's aspirations continue to soar with her sights set on the superintendency one day in the future where she can be the one charting the course.

Toni

Toni (Admin) grew up in a small town where no one ever left, in particular its Latino/a residents who rarely ventured out. Growing up in this small town, Toni (Admin) felt she did not fit in and longed to go away to college to study music. She considered herself a very smart musician and referred to herself as a "studious little music nerd." Her career pathway was a testament to her dedication and determination to make an impact through her professional

journey. Though she experienced a tumultuous start, Toni (Admin) eventually made her way to the University of California, Los Angeles, and became a renowned high school band director, winning multiple awards and honors, continuing to her tenure as an assistant principal and eventually as a principal at both elementary and high school levels. Her ascension to the principal position wasn't without hurdles. She easily obtained assistant principal jobs, and in fact, made a few lateral moves, but had more difficulty reaching the principal status. She attributes her upward mobility to mentors who saw in her what she failed to see in herself. Leveraging her lived experiences as a Latina, and leading with empathy and understanding, Toni (Admin) became a source of inspiration for her Latinx families and students. At a school where 93% of students were socioeconomically disadvantaged, 28% English Learners and a striking 94% identified as Hispanic or Latino, Toni (Admin) led with intentionality and purpose.

All administrators described experiences of supportive mentors in their principalship ascension. Therefore, this next section introduces their mentors and roles. Table 4.1 provides overall information and connections between the primary and secondary participants as follows (a) administrator's pseudonym, (b) administrative role (c) administrator's cultural identity, (d) mentor's pseudonym (e) mentor's role (f) mentor's cultural identity.

Table 4.1

Administrators and Mentors

Administrator (Mentee)	*Role*	*Identity*	Mentor	*Role*	*Identity*
Mina	*Principal*	*Mexican-American*	**Carmen**	*Director*	*Mexican*
Gabriela	*Principal*	*Latina*	**Brett**	*Teacher*	*White*
Ximena	*Principal*	*American Indigenous Latina*	**Pilar**	*Consultant*	*Latina*
Toni	*Retired Principal*	*Mexican*	**Carol**	*Retired Counselor*	*"Regular American"*

Although every administrator provided the researcher with a name of a person to interview, all four administrators named multiple people who stepped into their lives and helped or encouraged them along the way and added to their educational leadership development. The way the principal pathway is not linear, but more circular, so is the presence of mentors, continuously looping back to provide whatever is needed throughout their ascension to the principalship. These trusting mentorships came and went in stages, mirroring the stages of professional growth. Despite the multiplicity of mentors, they all experienced in their lives, the research findings will focus on only four mentor stories mentioned during the administrators' interviews.

Mentors

Carmen (Mentor) in her 34th year of education worked her way up from kindergarten teacher to principal. She proudly identifies as a "Latina woman with an accent" who wears her Mexican badge with pride. As a principal she took great pride in identifying school leaders amongst her teachers and helped build their capacity. Mina (Admin) was one of said top teachers. During her 13-year tenure as principal, Carmen (Mentor) intentionally set out to

prepare her teacher leaders and assistant principals in all aspects of the leadership role, including building their confidence and knowledge. When preparing and mentoring women of color, she understood the importance of putting extra effort into building their self-esteem and making them aware of barriers they would face as Latina administrators. Carmen's (Mentor) leadership style was very appealing to Mina (Admin), she felt empowered as she learned from her mentor and was handed many learning opportunities as a way of increasing her knowledge base and preparing her for a future leadership role in administration.

Brett (Mentor) worked closely with Gabriela (Admin) when she was a teacher and coach. He was a high school athletic director and coach who strongly believes that coaching is the entry point into administration. He felt this was true in the case of Gabriela (Admin) and noted her drive and tenacious attitude when she sent out a recruitment flyer for swim to students, letting them know that if they did not know how to swim, no problem, they should just stop by to see her. From her commencement as a teacher and coach, Brett (Mentor) saw a lot of potential in her, as she excelled and had strong skillsets in many areas, including building relationships with others. Brett (Mentor) also noted how invested Gabriela was in the community and how students could see themselves in her and felt she would have a greater impact on students and the community if she became and administrator. He was instrumental in building Gabriela's (Admin) self-esteem and encouraging her to pursue an administrative position.

Pilar (Mentor), a Cuban immigrant, has dedicated her life to education and helping others using education as the vehicle. She has mentored Ximena (Admin) and other Latinas in all levels of the educational sphere. Pilar (Mentor) is very cognizant of the fact that being a role model is also a branch of mentoring, and lives her life as an advocate, demonstrating the principles she advocates for other Latinas. As a mentor, she believes in promoting self-empowerment and

providing constructive feedback as a way of supporting growth. In her role as mentor, she has witnessed Latina administrators encounter gender and ethnic bias ("double minority" status), microaggressions, and challenges balancing cultural expectations at home and workplace responsibilities and norms. She is very cognizant of the fact that Latina administrators have limited access to mentorship opportunities and networks due to underrepresentation in leadership positions. As a consultant and author, Pilar (Mentor) worked closely with Ximena (Admin) and shared many moments of encouragement and love. Pilar (Mentor) is like a mother figure for Ximena (Admin) and aspires to be like her one day. Listening to understand, rather than aiming to provide a solution is a crucial aspect of her role as a mentor.

Carol (Mentor), a retired school counselor, considers herself an introvert and an observer, always watching and trying to figure things out. She found that Toni (Admin) was one of the few administrators she worked with that wanted to learn and was willing to collaborate with others in order to find solutions. She found it very admirable the way Toni's (Admin) perspective was from that of a leadership stance, never from the "good old boys" point of view. Their mentorship relationship included partaking in vulnerable conversations, creating a safe space for open conversations. Carol (Mentor) recalls conversations regarding what would be deemed appropriate for Toni (Admin) to say in order to avoid being "blacklisted" from the "good old boys' network" that held influence in district management. Carol (Mentor) listened and shared her advice and guidance, always affirming Toni's (Admin) intelligence.

Discussion of the Findings

The research study explored the personal and professional journeys of Latina school administrators, including the barriers they encountered moving through the principal pipeline. The research delved into their leadership trajectory and how they persevered through obstacles

they faced and in turn used those experiences to inform their leadership practices. This study also explored the dichotomy between work and home, and the impact of mentors in the lives of Latina administrators. This section will introduce the three research questions with the findings from the study. Since the research questions were so tightly woven with the interview questions, this section will be organized following the inquiry. Quotes used are representative of the experiences shared during the interviews.

Research Question 1

The lead question of this research frames the participant narratives in this study: *How do personal identities and authentic stories shape the leadership of Latina school administrators*?

Personal identities and authentic stories play a crucial role in shaping leadership practices. The personal identities of the Latina administrators refer to their personal traits and experiences that determine who they are based on their histories, funds of knowledge and lived experiences. This also encompasses how they perceive themselves, and how others perceive them. The identity of these administrators has been shaped by familial and cultural influences.

All four Latina leaders shared their pathways to the principalship and the decision-making about their lives that transpired along the way to find their seat at the table with other principals. They all learned to appreciate their identities and sacrifices in life and continued to make their way to the top. Throughout their experiences these Latina leaders demonstrated a sense of strength, perseverance, drive, and dedication to their pursuit of becoming principals. It was these assets that propelled them forward and helped them navigate new spaces and new roles even when they were faced with uncomfortable situations.

When confronted with an overwhelming workload, Ximena (Admin) shared how her cultural identity and her spirit of a hard-working Latina drove her to go above and beyond,

I think as a Latina, I have a very strong work ethic. I come from a lineage, where Latina women are very smart. My mom is very smart. They're [Latinas] very strong, they're hard workers. I think that has been a blessing, but a double-edged sword because I take on more, many times more because I can do it, and I end up overextending myself. It's also a blessing because I have been able to get teams behind me fairly quickly because of that work ethic. I wish I would have been stronger and said no, demand that I don't have to do more just because I'm a Latina, but I have not been that Latina. (Ximena, Admin)

Similarly, for Mina (Admin), her identity as a Latina and her experiences with discrimination have intersected her professional life. For example, her experiences with discrimination, such as when she was tasked with providing information about Transitional Kindergarten (TK) to parents and found out through her research that the district was out of compliance, yet the assistant superintendent at the time did not have confidence in her to make changes. She informed district management that they would be audited, but the answer from the assistant superintendent was that it was going to go away. In Mina's (Admin) mind she thought, "No, it's not, but I'm not going to contradict this woman." This situation made her very uncomfortable to continue advocating what she knew to be right, and it made her question her confidence as a leader, and the silencing of her voice and knowledge in these confrontations. As such, there are times when she still doubts herself,

I feel sometimes uncomfortable when I'm surrounded by White people, like a culture shock and their experiences that they have that I haven't. And I will sometimes stay silent and not speak or share because I'm worried about how I'm going to sound. So, I tend to think about it a lot and write it out sometimes before I share. I'm getting better at it, though. (Mina, Admin)

The impact of these cultural identity confrontations has forced her to be extra cautious and prepared when she finds herself in situations surrounded by White leaders. She has learned to find the strength to believe in herself and continue to persevere. When a new assistant superintendent came into the district, Mina (Admin) found the opportunity to share with him

what she found out regarding TK. As a result, he put her in charge of a committee who helped design TK based on the state requirements. She shared the plan with Cabinet, and then the Governing Board. The success that came with this encouraged her to believe in herself and gain the confidence that she could in fact one day become a principal. As she recalls, "It felt great to lead (Mina, Admin)."

Other Latina principals shared similar stories about discrimination. Similarly, Ximena (Admin) divulged information about the times she felt direct discrimination due to her identity, especially during the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic. During that time, her assistant principal, who happened to be African American, also felt disrespected as they relayed information from the district office to staff members. Staff members displayed unkind treatment, racism, and microaggressions directed towards the two administrators of color. Ximena (Admin) and her assistant principal were asked by district management to share weekly COVID updates to staff and it was common for staff members to become upset and question the information delivered to them. The staff lacked empathy and treated Ximena (Admin) very unkindly and with disrespect. While Ximena (Admin) recognized that everyone was under a great deal of stress at the time due to the uncertainties brought upon by the COVID pandemic, "I know that when people are under stress, empathy goes out the window, but I think it was even more because we were Latina." She also adds, "In my opinion, as Latinas, we have to navigate…or you know…African American, or just women of color, you have to navigate the extra layer first." She refers to identifying as a leader first, then recognizing that others see ethnicity and gender as additional layers. In the case of Ximena (Admin), the racism and microaggressions created distance between her and her staff. She left her school site after being recruited to support another school and shared that she no longer speaks to any teachers from that previous school. In fact, she shared "I don't wanna

have… anything to do with any of those teachers (Ximena, Admin)." Although the experience for Ximena (Admin) caused her a lot of emotional stress, she continued to believe in herself and her strength and moved on to another leadership role. She recognized that despite the negativity directed towards her, she had the confidence to know she did the job well. Her passion as an educator encouraged her to continue moving forward despite the challenges she endured.

Work-life balance and time was described as a sacrifice by these Latina leaders. Their determination to persevere despite cultural expectations helped propel them forward, not stopping until they reached the principalship. For Ximena (Admin), when new professional opportunities arose, she felt the need to take them on, even if it meant taking time away from her family.

Early on in her career, before she had children, Ximena (Admin) took on most of the household roles as it was her husband who was climbing up the ranks professionally. Once she started going up the ladder, she was faced with the challenge of no longer being able to be the primary caregiver at home due to additional work responsibilities and longer workdays. What she deemed initially as a barrier, was quickly resolved due to the support from her husband. With unconditional support, their traditional roles switched, he became the household cook, had dinner ready when Ximena (Admin) arrived home, fed the kids and attended to their needs. Ximena (Admin) and her husband found ways to negotiate their familial expectations, she was fine with succumbing to traditional roles, as this enabled her to continue to focus on her career trajectory,

> You know, I lead all these people…but at home I'm still mom, and I revert, and I like that, actually. I know stereotypically sometimes people think Latina leaders, that they're always leading like at home and at work. But I like to just be the wife and the mom at home, and my husband has the role that he takes care of like the pain of the house, like the payments and all that. (Ximena, Admin)

Her goal to reach the principalship motivated her to keep moving forward. As she reflected upon her trajectory, she mentioned that she didn't feel she was always in control of the professional decisions she made. Ximena (Admin) felt that when these job offers and promotions presented themselves, she was not in a position to decline them as it would jeopardize her ascension to the top. In pursuit of the principal role, she leveraged her strength and determination to do what was necessary to become a principal. In the world of education, many would agree that you cannot decline a job offer, as the unwritten rule states that if you say no, there may be implications for professional advancement. Ximena (Admin) reflected and wondered if she had the opportunity to re-write her narrative, would the outcome remain the same, and would she find herself in the same professional role,

> I wish someone would've told me, have a plan, or hey, it's okay for you to say no, the outcome will still be the same. I could have stayed with my little girls a little bit longer. I needed to be in control of that, and I wasn't (Ximena, Admin).

Ximena's (Admin) strong work ethic, coupled with her limited experiences influenced the professional decisions she made. As a first-generation Latina she had to navigate her professional career on her own. Like her mother, who instilled in her dedication and a very strong work ethic, Ximena (Admin) worked as hard as she could, taking on all tasks asked of her, thinking that was the way to get to the principalship. Years later she recognized that had she known otherwise, she would have done things differently. Her identity as first-gen played a pivotal role in her decision-making process, often relying on her limited knowledge, not having parents to rely on for guidance.

Continuing the discussion on career decisions and their impact, Toni (Admin) sheds light on how her identity influenced her relationships with her families. Toni (Admin) found herself leveraging her identity and sharing cultural experiences that her parents could relate to first-hand.

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She recalls a time in her career where she was assigned to be the assistant principal at a school

that was the opposite of where she had been working. Her experience at the time was working in

a high performing school, made up of very privileged students who "were very upset when they

didn't get into Harvard." Her new job placement was at a school with much different

demographics. This particular school had roughly 97% of the students identified as "minorities"

and 90% falling into the socioeconomically disadvantaged category. Toni recalls this experience

vividly as she experienced apprehension to start at this new school,

> I was terrified, I'd never worked with gang kids, and I didn't grow up around that
> influence either. So, when I got there, I'm like, oh, these kids are just kids.
> There's no such thing as a gang kid. So, then the fear or working with at-risk kids,
> I just fell in love. with them because they were me, and I didn't know that until I
> got there. I fell in love with that whole community and with at-risk youth. I knew
> that was my calling, and that's where I needed to be because I was able to relate
> to the parents.

Toni (Admin) shared her experiences dialoguing with parents when their kids got in

trouble. It was her identity that she leaned into when working with the parents and students at

this school,

> When the kids got in trouble, I was able to talk to the parents. I was able to just
> make these little boys cry, give them the whole Mexican guilt. I could do
> Catholic, Mexican guilt better than anybody as an AP [assistant principal], but
> that was because I had the cultural background, I shared their culture. I could say
> things to parents, and I could say things to kids that no one else could because I
> did not look like any of the rest of my colleagues, so I could get results that they
> couldn't. So that's the identity piece, choosing to work in the communities where
> I grew up. (Toni, Admin)

It was this ability to connect with parents and students on a cultural level, using her

cultural wealth, and tapping into shared experiences that Toni used to achieve results that other

administrators could not. She saw this as a testament to the power of embracing her Latina

identity.

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These Latina administrators not only leveraged their identity to establish and nurture connections with families and students, but also to advocate for them and be their voice. Gabriela (Admin) was also an administrator in a high performing school, but focused on the small, marginalized population that needed support,

> I do make it a purpose to lead with the fact that I'm Mexican. I'm first gen, I code switch, and it's become a very open conversation with my colleagues, especially once I became principal. That was even more front and center because I was the only female, one, and two, the only Latina in the room. I have always had a lot of pride in the way that I build relationships and I say things with a smile, and I'm able to talk about it very openly and acknowledge that people are uncomfortable sometimes with having these cultural conversations so openly. So, it's been my goal to lower the affective filter by pointing it back to myself and sharing my experiences growing up an EL student. It was very helpful to be able to use my positionality as a Latina leader, as a female, as a first gen student, to bring that front and center and doing it in a way where they [district management] didn't feel threatened or uncomfortable.

Gabriela (Admin) went on to discuss how there have been times in her career where she has been truly upset at the lack of support given to the Latino community. She saw that families did not always have access as she noticed that not all things were (and sometimes still aren't) translated into Spanish for the Spanish-speaking communities. Gabriela does acknowledge that school districts where she has worked have made progress and feels that her intentional involvement has helped,

> We still have a way to go, but we've come a long way, and I'm glad that I've been able to be a part of it, but I've had to make it, I had to consciously make it [the need for support] front and center. If I need to wear my big hoopy earrings [aspect of identity] at the board meeting, that's just what I have to do. (Gabriela, Admin)

The accounts shared serve as reminders about the added layers that are felt by Latina administrators, especially in regard to their racialized identity and gender. Latina administrators often navigated complex challenges of their intersectionality, finding themselves filled with self-

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doubt, and internal struggles as evidenced by these narratives. It is through their lenses that the interplay between race, racism, and other forms of subordination affected their childhoods and professional experiences, these findings are central to the first LatCrit theoretical framework tenet regarding *the centrality of race and racism and intersectionality* (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Yet, what empowered these leaders is recognizing that when they confronted challenging situations, and navigated through as Latinas, they continued to shatter barriers and continued to succeed.

Research Question 2

How do Latina administrators overcome the workforce/home related barriers during their ascension to the principalship?

The participants' authentic stories revealed challenges in their everyday personal lives and workplace environments. In their journey to the principalship, Latina administrators faced a myriad of challenges, including balancing the demands at work with the responsibilities at home. All four administrators shared the impact that their identity had on their interactions, including relationships with stakeholders, relationships with spouses, and how these presented themselves as barriers unique to their backgrounds. Even though all these women found themselves in successful professional roles, the dichotomy between their professional lives and their familial expectations presented complexities and challenges. As administrators, the responsibilities can feel overwhelming and challenging when trying to juggle district expectations, meeting the needs of staff, parents, and students, longer workdays, then going home to meet the family and household responsibilities. This study also highlights that without a strong support system at work and at home, balancing the intense requirements of their professional lives with the

household expectations such as cooking dinner, doing laundry, etc. can pose many challenges due to time constraints.

As a first-generation Latina, Gabriela (Admin) described her thoughts when she first became an interim assistant principal, "I think innately because we've always, I think as Latinos, sometimes we sit back and just watch the landscape before jumping into it because we don't know how or other situations. And so, I did that quite a bit. I sat back and watched the landscape of what was happening." Feelings of inadequacy due to a perceived lack of knowledge created a sense of doubt for these women as they learned to become administrators. Even with site administrative experiences, lack of knowledge still echoes, looking ahead, aspiring to higher administrative levels. Gabriela (Admin) expressed her apprehensions,

> My biggest barrier is because I am very conscious now, as much as I lead with the fact that I am Latina, I am also very conscious that I am still the only Latina, and I am still very conscious of how do I network. There are things that I don't know still. For as great as I've had it with my career, I still don't know how to get that next job. (Gabriela, Admin).

For Latina leaders, not only do these barriers impede their progress, but it is these internal obstacles and self-imposed limitations that hold them back. Even though Latina leaders are just as qualified to lead or speak in front of any group or do any administrative role, if they do not believe it, they will not easily pursue upward mobility. Gabriela (Admin) shared that looking back, she feels because of Imposter Syndrome and lack of self-confidence, she held herself back from becoming a principal sooner. In this study, Imposter Syndrome refers to the self-doubt Gabriela imposed onto herself in a way that made her feel like she was not as capable as others, almost as if she were going to be exposed as a fraud. Gabriela (Admin) articulates it clearly,

> I [learned] I needed to take it slow, and as a female, that's also one of our faults, right? That we feel like a lot of the white males can just jump in and even if they half know what they're doing, and we already have that innate lack of, it's not the lack of drive, [but] that barrier in ourselves. (Gabriela, Admin)

Mina (Admin) found herself getting married at a young age because her immigrant parents told her she would not be allowed to leave her house to attend college. Her mom told her, "*Aunque podamos ayudarte [pagar el colegio], no te vas hasta que te cases*," which translates into "even if we can help you [pay for college], you are not leaving until you marry." So that is exactly what Mina (Admin) did, she married. As a young woman she had kids at an early age, starting when she was 21. With an encouraging husband at the time and helpful parents nearby, Mina (Admin) was able to depend on them for help with childcare as she went back to school. She continued her educational journey, with her husband supporting her along the way for many years. However, as she ascended into the ranks of leadership, she saw some cultural differences between herself, as a first-generation Latina, and her Mexican-born husband, who was not college educated. Mina (Admin) remembers that she and her ex-husband tried to balance roles and responsibilities. These expectations became household barriers as Mina (Admin) was trying to manage the demanding work and home responsibilities,

> I did oversee overall the household and made it happen. You just make it happen. You know what, sometimes you tell yourself, you don't know how you do it, you just do it. There's no rhyme or reason, you just do it because you have to. (Mina, Admin)

These household barriers created challenges as Mina (admin) did what is expected of Latinas, she tried to do it all,

After I became a principal, my workload got bigger and my relationship with my ex, he continued to do what he was doing, and mine, just my workload got larger, and he didn't come up to assist. I was exhausted. I was like, I'm doing all this work and nobody's helping me. And my relationship changed. (Mina, Admin)

Mina (Admin) described workload and relationship barriers. Her responsibilities at work increased after becoming a principal, and she felt exhausted attempting to juggle her personal and professional life. The lack of support from her ex-husband created a strain on her relationship and created a workload-related barrier which made it difficult for her to manage her professional and personal responsibilities,

But as I grew professionally, I began to see more and more and more. There are things that I like to do that he didn't want to do with me. So, I found myself doing more things by myself. (Mina, Admin)

Mina's (Admin) professional growth led to a shift within their relationship. This disengagement barrier resulted in differences in interests between her and her ex-husband, and a feeling of isolation and disconnect.

For Mina (Admin), the conflict between the demands of her job as an administrator and her responsibilities as a wife and mother manifested in adverse ways, adding stress to her personal and professional life. She struggled to meet the demands and felt like she lacked support from her spouse. As a result of this disconnect, Mina (Admin) ended up separating from her husband. However, her passion for her role as principal continued to motivate her to succeed professionally.

The barriers between self and family began early for Toni (Admin) when she was a senior in high school. Similarly to Mina (Admin), she was not able to go away to college immediately after high school. Although her parents wanted the last of their four children to attend University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), they did not allow her to major in music,

even though she was admitted into UCLA. Toni (Admin) tried to appease her parents and went to a local community college for a year and majored in nursing while excelling with straight A's and on the Dean's list, she was miserable. She asked her parents again if she could attend UCLA and this time, they supported her decision. Going through this struggle with her parents and overcoming this barrier gave her insight into similar situations between students who wanted to go away to college, but whose parents were not willing to let them go. Later in life, she leveraged her experience as she coached her students and spoke to their parents about the importance of going to college.

The ability to navigate the divide between professional aspirations and familial obligations was a common feature of the Latina narratives in this study. However, even with a supportive spouse, some professional Latinas, like Gabriela (Admin), still had to learn to negotiate roles and familial expectations. Gabriela (Admin), as the oldest in her Mexican family, was accepting of the responsibilities of her role, but still felt very supported by her family,

> I as the oldest, am a very balanced person, however, I understand the roles interestingly …have remained the same traditional roles…My dad gets fed first…if we're cooking dinner, as a female, I'm still expected to get up and serve them. I think it's really a very unique personal situation where I feel like I have to take care of everybody. [I'm] the oldest cousin, the oldest sister. I'm the first one to get married. I have the oldest kid and my parents are getting older. I will have to be the one taking care of everything. So, as a caregiver, essentially, I have come to peace with that role, but everybody's supportive of the fact that I have this job that pulls me away quite a bit. (Gabriela, Admin)

It is her family's support system that she attributed to her ability to successfully toggle between her professional responsibilities and her personal life. Even with family support, Gabriela (Admin) was confronted with the complexities of managing her personal and professional life, as she did not believe a work-life balance exists,

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I don't believe there is ever going to be a work-life balance. I don't believe that exists. What I think is that there are times when you're going to be heavy into work, and there are times where you just have to focus at home and you have to make those really strong hard decisions and deal with the mommy guilt and the cultural guilt because it is an added component. I've learned how to manage that mommy guilt on my own. (Gabriela, Admin)

With so many demands placed on them, Latina leaders learned to juggle their professional roles and responsibilities, and their personal lives, while demonstrating commitment in both domains. Although Gabriela (Admin) felt she managed it well, she did reiterate that a work-life balance did not exists. She faced weeks where she was home late multiple times in one week, and there were other weeks where she was home at a reasonable time,

You just have to manage it [time]. There's other weeks where I can be home at a reasonable time every day and cook dinner and be there and not feel the mommy guilt. But I've been lucky that my family is very supportive. Does he [husband] still get served first? Yes. Does it not pop into his head that he should do laundry today? No, because he was born and raised in a very traditional Mexican household but has to deal with a really professional wife that has a professional successful career. (Gabriela, Admin)

Overall, Gabriela (Admin) was able to successfully fulfill her professional commitments as a principal and her personal responsibilities as a wife and mother. Similar to the experiences of the other Latina administrators, Ximena (Admin) also faced the complex struggle of work-life balance but overcame the challenges and persevered with support.

Listening carefully to the narratives brings an awareness to the notion that these administrators, all of which are first-generation Latinas, made it to the principalship, yet reflected on the time it took to get them there. Their own self-created barriers influenced their goals and trajectory to obtain the next administrative position. As a result, they stayed in a role, typically the assistant principal role, for a long time, and in some cases, they felt it was "too long" even though they possessed the necessary qualifications and skills. These self-created barriers

hindered their ability to take risks and advocate for themselves. They remained stagnant in their careers.

Gabriela (Admin) recognizes the role Imposter Syndrome and self-barriers has played in her career, holding her back unnecessarily from becoming a principal sooner,

> I think that whole Imposter Syndrome and not having that full confidence in yourself really did hold me back from maybe stepping into this [principal] role a lot sooner and being confident enough to even look outside again, like go to another district. There are principals, and you see a lot of my male colleagues just jump through districts like nothing. (Gabriela, Admin)

Despite the complex obstacles presented by juggling professional and personal demands, these four administrators found ways to manage their work and household roles and successfully pursue their professional goals. With the support and guidance from mentors and family, these administrators embraced their identities, and navigated systemic barriers and pursued their pathways to the principalship with gumption, which algins to the second tenet of LatCrit, *challenging traditional claims of meritocracy, color blindness, and equal opportunity* (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

Research Question 3

How do mentor interactions impact the leadership trajectory of the Latina administrators?

All four Latina administrators mentioned the importance of having a mentor to rely on or motivate them to ascend toward the administrative pathway. Whether it was nudging them, or offering them jobs, the importance of mentors was key in their professional development and ascension. According to the Latina administrators in this study, their presence was always felt, even if their title of "mentor" was never clearly or formally defined. Their relationships were

based on personal connections and shared interests. Their interactions were more spontaneous and organic, and focused on general support, advice, or sharing knowledge.

For Toni (Admin), she was surrounded by supportive district administrators who saw potential in her and encouraged her to become a school site administrator, with one of them even motivating her to pursue her doctorate. At the time, Toni (Admin) was pursuing a degree in counseling, not administration, but after their encouragement, she changed her focus to administration. It was during her doctoral program that she would find applications on her desk, nudging her to interview for an administrator position. After taking an administration position outside her district, she was encouraged to return to her former district by her two informal mentors who had a job opportunity waiting for her. She describes these mentors as "very, very influential" including the superintendent, whom she got to know very well, she shares "... those three were instrumental in pushing me in becoming an administrator (Toni, Admin)."

Similarly, Gabriela's (Admin) potential and skill set were evident, demonstrating her capability to excel in any leadership role. It was her colleague, and mentor, Brett (Mentor), who encouraged her to seek out administrative positions as he thought very highly of her. He saw leadership skillsets that he knew would make her an excellent school leader. Brett (Mentor) described her as being very organized, displaying strong people skills as she was very nice, yet, when necessary, possessed adeptness in engaging in difficult conversations with individuals. Brett (Mentor) shared, "I really thought [pause] she reminded me of people who I knew who had been really successful." He recalls that she was set on teaching, "I think originally the biggest obstacle for her was she felt like she was having a greater impact on teaching World History and coaching (Brett, Mentor)." Brett (Mentor) remembers telling her, "Gabriela (Admin), you're really good at a lot of things. Have you ever thought if you can work in the store? You can run it,

you could own it." Brett (Mentor) took on a strategic approach in the way he tapped her on the

shoulder, expressing confidence in her leadership potential and encouraging her to pursue a role

in administration,

> I might've been the first one, but maybe [it's] a strategy. So once I tap somebody
> on the shoulder, I'll go find somebody else that they know, they respect and I'll
> say, hey, don't you think Gabriela would be a good administrator? And they say,
> of course, and I say, have you ever told her? … and then it's the old Alpha Beta
> [grocery chain]. Their ad commercials one time was, you tell two friends, and
> they tell two friends, and they tell two friends, and so maybe that, but I just feel
> like, again, a lot of it is self-concept. (Brett, Mentor)

> To this date, Gabriela (Admin) still considers Brett (Mentor) as a friend near and dear to

her as she recalls him always encouraging her and inspiring others to do the same,

> We worked very closely together, and he's like, no, you need to do this, you need
> to do that. You've got it, you've got it, you've got it. …because I'm very shy in
> that sense, it's been not like a formalized mentor-mentee relationship with the
> people that I've surrounded myself with. It's been mostly people that have given
> me kudos, that I've been able to reflect with, have conversations with, vent with.
> (Gabriela, Admin)

Brett's (Mentor) belief in Gabriela (Admin) gave her the confidence she needed to

recognize her competence and skillset enabling her to seek out an administrative role and

improve education.

Mirroring a similar relationship, Mina (Admin) found encouragement from her mentor

Carmen (Mentor). Drawing support from her mentor, Mina (Admin) found inspiration in her and

other Latina administrators who served as mentors,

> I'm grateful that I've had good mentors, great mentors who have been Latinas,
> and I thought, if she can do it, I can do it, like wait, wait, wait, if she can do it, I
> can do it, right? That's been a huge positive (Mina, Admin)

> Mina (Admin) credits much of her success to her close friend and mentor, Carmen

(Mentor). Mina (Admin) liked her mentor's style, she was strong, "tough" and Latina. Seeing

herself in Carmen (Mentor) reinforces the impact of representation (Méndez-Morse, 2004),

> Through her [Carmen's] leadership and her support and mentorship, I do believe I am where I'm at, and I did lean on her when I began my principalship. Even as an AP [assistant principal], I would call her, hey, this happened, I'm by myself, my principal's not here. And also, as a principal I would call her, what's the situation with this? I would follow her lead. It helped a lot. (Mina, Admin)

Carmen (Mentor) shares her experiences mentoring others, particularly her assistant

principals when she was a site principal. In particular, she mentions two assistant principals that

she is extremely proud of, one being Mina (Admin), and the other, an African American woman,

Destiny, who also rose through the principal pipeline. Carmen (Mentor) specifically says that she

does not consider herself a formal mentor, but rather felt the responsibility of building the

capacity of her assistant principals in order to prepare them to be principals. However, in the case

of Mina (Admin) and Destiny, their guidance and support differed due to their cultural

backgrounds,

> I think it was different only because I knew that the adversities that come our way, whether we want them, invite them, or not, they're there and we have to be very much aware of them so that they don't become barriers of your profession so that you're able to develop that knowledge in removing them. So, given that Mina is Hispanic and Destiny is African American, I also had to put a little more effort in not only building their self-esteem and believing in themselves, which is really important to do with anyone you're mentoring, but also to make them aware of the barriers they were going to face…being women of color. (Carmen, Mentor)

Ximena (Admin), like the other three administrators, also, shares the impact mentors

have had on her trajectory, and remembers being tapped on the shoulder by a leader, a former

principal, whom she considers an informal mentor. Ximena (Admin) acknowledged that they

didn't establish a formal mentor-mentee relationship, but she watched and learned from her. She

admires her for many reasons, including her ability to problem solve, her intelligence, her

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outspoken personality, and her strength. Ximena (Admin) shared "Like I said, not necessarily

formally [mentorship], but I learned from her so much. Everything that I observed in her, I then

put into practice in my own way as an AP (assistant principal), and as a principal."

Ximena (Admin) also shared great thoughts about another mentor, Pilar (Admin), whom

she sought advice from when she contemplated moving to an elementary school principalship,

> She has been, you know, kind of that, kind of like that mother figure of my
> profession, right. She's that foundation, that staple that's there. I want to be like
> her. Like that's who I aspire to be like. Pilar is more like love, and always
> encouraging, and she always gives me words of encouragement (Ximena,
> Admin).

As a Cuban immigrant refugee, Pilar's (Mentor) family instilled in her the high value of

education, and in turn, vowed to dedicate her life to this field and helping others through

educational endeavors and goals, which she has done as a mentor to Ximena (Mentor) and

others. It is not a surprise to hear her describe her experiences as a mentor as "joyous." She also

recognizes that being a role model is another form of mentoring and feels very fulfilled taking on

this role,

> Mentoring is an extension of your best self. You need to be aware that other
> Latinas are observing your behaviors and attitudes. I have tried to live my
> professional life as an advocate, walking the talk, learning from failure and
> regrets, sharing lessons learned with all. Mentoring is sometimes like a soulful
> mirror that peers into the states of being, where you receive an image and adjust
> somewhat to reflect the best of self. Listening and understanding that beyond the
> challenging circumstances of achieving a new role within the educational system,
> there are systemic and social obstacles confronting aspiring Latinas. (Pilar,
> Mentor)

Pilar (Mentor) shared her thoughts about how "barriers are hidden in the societal

expectations" that Latinas face in defining their roles. She believes that a glass ceiling exists, and she has seen many Latina applicants excluded from being selected, even though they are highly qualified and capable of doing the job,

> Sometimes the hidden agenda is one of coercive relationships of power. Simply stated, the system or the status quo does not want to share power with other than their own kind. The system goes to great lengths to exclude a worthy Latina applicant from being selected while pretending to give the applicant an equal and fair chance. (Pilar, Mentor)

From their narratives, it is clear that the four administrators emphasized the value and impact their mentoring relationships had on their trajectory, helping them get to the principalship.

Discussion

After hearing the authentic stories of the Latina administrators, it became clear that there were similarities woven through their narratives as they made their way through the principal pipeline, starting with their identities as Latinas, and their *"sí se puede"* mindset. Although none of them began their educational careers with the goal of becoming administrators, they were all very strong and successful teachers and were recognized for their work ethic, determination, and talents, something they (and their mentors) attributed to their identity as Latinas. As they shared their stories of barriers, mentors and support systems, the underlying thread was the way they approached struggles or challenges that surfaced as they made their way through the principal pipeline. The administrators recounted their journeys and how they remained focused and persevered whenever they were confronted with a challenge. They often looked for a mentor, or family member when they were in need of support or guidance. Their determination, coupled with guidance of mentors and strong support systems, helped them find their pathway to the principalship.

Along the same vein, the mentors also shared stories describing the Latina administrators as determined, resilient and successful teachers who saw strong leadership skills in them and encouraged them to ascend upwardly and make the shift to administration. Even though there were no clearly defined mentor roles, the mentors acknowledged that they continued to play a role in the administrators' lives. The relationship stemmed from connections, interests, and trust, which is why their influence was so strong. Without mutual trust and respect, the administrators would not have found the courage to believe in themselves the way the mentors believed in them.

The dialogic topics highlighted in this study, are all within the context of LatCrit and the pursuit of equity and social justice. LatCrit (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) focuses on how identities of marginalized groups like Latina administrators, intersect with the struggles they face, the need to dismantle barriers and inequalities, and continue to elevate the voices and experiences of Latina administrators.

After triangulating the data between the interviews of the administrators, their mentors, and the five tenets of the LatCrit Framework (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001) categories emerged through the coding process. In furthering this coding process, the study revealed three salient overarching themes that illuminated the trajectory of Latinas as they navigated their way to the principalship.

Through the interviews and exploration of Research Question #1, it revealed that these four administrators possessed a unique and multifaceted identity. Their character stemmed from resilience, self-perception, shaped by their lived experiences, their strong faith in religious convictions, and a sense of belonging to a broader community. The notion of religious beliefs of Latino families can intertwine deeply, shaping familial dynamics. As an example, Mina (Admin)

had strong convictions to her Catholic faith and leveraged this as a way of connecting with Latino families in her community. Mina (Admin) discovered the power of embracing shared values to make connections with her families after hearing a story from another Latina principal and mentor. Mina's (Admin) mentor mentioned the benefits of leveraging religion. Specifically, her mentor shared the significance of having a Virgen de Guadalupe in her office as a way of relating to families who were also of Catholic faith. Her mentor's words resonated with Mina (Admin) because she too always wore her Virgencita necklace,

> I never forgot that [meeting]. When I had my own office, my own principalship, well, I have a little Virgencita. Let me tell you that first of all, it helps me pray…But also, the children would come in and see her, the parents would come in and see and they're like "OH." I felt I built very good relationships with parents. (Mina, Admin)

While seemingly small and trivial, the idea of sharing a common faith served as a powerful means of representation, fostering a sense of connection and community.

The four administrators' authentic stories captured the importance of their identity as it influenced the onset of their journeys to the principalship. Their journey unfolds into three interconnected phases marked by themes that trace their leadership trajectory. Subsequently, the themes continue an upward trajectory during the Latina's leadership journey that can be described as three related phases: beginning with the Discovery of Self and Overcoming Barriers to their renewed Empowerment through Mentorships and Supports and transcending to the Calling or *La Vocación* as shown in Figure 4.1. Although the start of their trajectories differ, their stories merge as they begin moving forward and upward, finding mentors who help support and guide them as they face challenges, until they reach their Calling, the principalship. Once these administrators find themselves in the final phase, they begin to recognize the extent of their influence and the impact they have on students, families and communities. It is then that they

feel confident to continue charting their course as they recognize their unbounded ascension. With this newfound empowerment, they are inspired to continue ascending into other leadership roles such as directors, assistant superintendents and superintendents. Figure 4.1 presents the themes that transcend from bottom to top with the corresponding tenets of LatCrit.
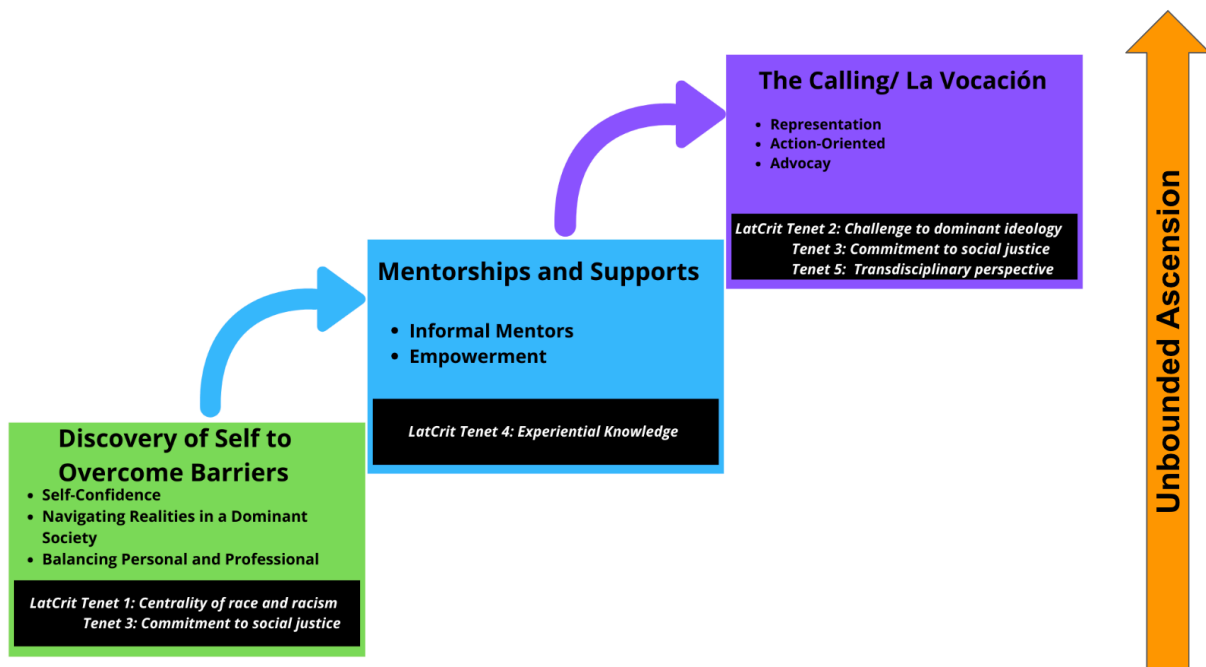

Figure 4.1

*Trajecto*ry *of Latina Administrator's Leadership Journey: Discovery, Empowerment through Mentorships, and Call to Action*

Discovery of Self and Strengths to Overcome Barriers

Woven through the narratives of the Latina administrators was the notion of self-doubt, internal barriers that transpired within them, as they questioned whether or not they could lead schools successfully. The lack of confidence and imposter syndrome lived in their minds, yet they persevered as they ascended to the principalship. The four women shared challenges that surrounded them yet found determination and strength within themselves, through

encouragement from their mentors, to keep climbing up the educational ladder, despite questioning their self-efficacy.

In one fashion or another, all the Latina leaders presented some doubts and questioned their knowledge. The nuances involved in running a school are vast and require a base of knowledge to make educational decisions that impact student achievement and success. For some, taking a passive stance is a strategy that works for those who don't feel comfortable or competent. For others, it is having someone to reach out to for support. Mina (Admin) shared one lesson she was taught early on in her administrative career, "You need to know the contract, and how things run politically." She was able to lean on her mentor to support her learning in this area. Having a mentor to ask what may appear to be a simple question, is invaluable when learning a new role.

Building Self-Confidence

As these women leaders navigated the complex landscape of administration, they faced challenges of self-confidence. All the administrators initially battled with self-confidence and seeing in themselves the potential their mentors saw in them as future leaders. As they looked to their mentors for guidance and support, the administrators began their discovery phase, finding their leadership skills and voice. Within this phase, they trusted their intuition and developed the courage to persevere and step outside their comfort zone. As challenges presented themselves, the Latina administrators relied on what they knew about themselves and their culture in order to build the relationships with their students and their families. The students they represented were the reminder they needed which drove them to overcome adversities, including incidents regarding racism, without quitting their trajectory.

The four Latinas all set out to be teachers, only Mina (Admin) aspired to be an assistant principal one day, and the others did not set out to make administration their professional goal. Along their pathways, feelings of self-confidence emerged, and it wasn't until another person instilled in them the confidence, they needed to move up the ladder. Although Mina (Admin) knew that one day she aspired to be an assistant principal, she didn't have the confidence to be a principal. Mina (Admin) shared her feelings of self-doubt.

> I never thought myself as a principal, never. That was just something I just didn't think I could do. Even though I saw Latina leaders, I mean there was Dr. Vega, there was Mercedes Ochoa, Carmen Sánchez, but I didn't feel I had the confidence to do it, and maybe it stems from the way I grew up and my home. (Mina, admin)

Learning to Navigate Their Realities in a Dominant Society

Another challenge these Latinas navigated was the weight of discrimination and microaggressions. For these women, these acts of discrimination and microaggressions varied from overt to subtle behaviors. This is not new and is often the case with Latina administrators who also face stereotypical assumptions imposed onto them (Martínez et el., 2020). Toni (Admin) recalls often being asked if she was related to a principal with a Spanish surname simply because he too was Latino. It became an inside joke. In fact, Toni (Admin) and this gentleman would jokingly tell others they were cousins "because all Mexicans are related." It was something the duo joked about and when he would see her, he would yell across the way, "Prima, ¡vénganse!" which means, "Come on, cousin!"

In the case of Ximena (Admin), she had experienced discrimination in her past but had never encountered it as overtly as she did during her principalship amid the COVID-19 pandemic. She shares a poignant story as she recalls that particular year when she was a principal at Springbrook Elementary,

During that horrendous COVID year, like I said, we were open. I have to say that…I experienced what I know as racism. I had experienced it institutionalized [racism] but it was never 100% directed [at me]. Or maybe it was, but I wasn't as aware until that particular year. Every week we had things that I had to communicate with staff. [The] lack of empathy was incredible to me. I cannot attribute to anything other than because I was a Latina, because I know 100% that if I had been a male, or had I been a White male, or a White female, they would have never treated me the way that they treated me. (Ximena, Admin)

The negative environment of hostility and discrimination created a barrier for Ximena (Admin) that made it difficult for her to thrive as their school leader. Her drive and commitment endured, and she tackled every situation with grace and professionalism. Although she chose to move to a different school, she left confidently knowing that she had done a commendable job in her role.

Balancing Personal and Professional Life

As they went through the principal pipeline, the four Latina administrators encountered challenges with work-life balance. They reached out to their mentors for support and guidance, took a leap of faith and continued moving through their trajectory. The difficulties lay as they navigated their professional roles while juggling cultural expectations and personal responsibilities. With the principal role comes major life changes. Priorities change due to longer workdays, additional time commitments, ne schedules all working in unison to ensure expectations and responsibilities are met. For those administrators who are mothers, they needed to restructure gender roles in order to ensure adequate childcare for their children. Their new reality as administrators forced them to reshape gender roles, highlighting the intersectionality of race and gender, something not typically done in traditional Latino/a households. All of the women had to negotiate and establish clear expectations of what they needed, and who they needed it from in, in order to accommodate their needs and responsibilities.

Ximena (Admin) struggled with the long hours and demands of being a high school administrator with two toddlers at home and decided to move into the elementary school world since there are fewer late nights in the absence of high school sporting events to attend. The decision was not easy, but recognizing how extremely important family is to her, she described the moment when she realized that she needed to prioritize her personal responsibilities over her professional ones.

> The deciding factor was actually one day when I realized that I had left my kids in the Montessori. They were the first ones to be dropped off at 6:00 am in the morning and they were the last ones to be picked up at 6:00 pm in the afternoon. I thought what are you doing? So that was the deciding factor. (Ximena, Admin)

After careful thought and self-reflection, Ximena (Admin) transitioned to elementary school principal in order to find work-life balance.

In order to manage it all, these professional Latina educators have had to make sacrifices along the way. Toni and her spouse made the conscious decision to not have children because they knew that their professional lives consumed most of their time. "So, he [spouse] coaches, I'm a …high school principal, so we're both just busy and we didn't have kids. We chose not to because we knew we weren't going to be home, and if we did, it was like I worked too hard to get where I'm at." For Toni (Admin), choosing to prioritize the professional commitments and responsibilities associated with being a school site administrator was her priority, foregoing the pursuit of parenthood.

In summary the Theoretical Framework provides a lens through which to address and challenge systemic injustices and transformative change. In alignment to LatCrit Tenet 1, the Latina administrators recognize the experiences of marginalized communities and advocate for change as they critically examine the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with the other forms of subordination. They understand that it is at the root of some of the challenges

they faced. Their commitment to addressing inequities lies at the forefront of their work as administrators. This is in alignment with LatCrit Tenet 3, recognizing and addressing the way various forms of oppression and subordination can intersect with an individual's experiences and opportunities. The work they do as school principals reflects their commitment to changing educational systems that address inequities found within them.

Mentorships and Support

Navigating a dichotomy between self and family expectations, these Latina administrators find themselves empowered by informal mentors, and leaning on family for support. Although informal mentors don't operate within a structure, or clearly defined roles and objectives, informal mentors are those who are trustworthy, respected, and can provide guidance, support, advice, or encouragement. This type of relationship is built on trust and a strong rapport, sharing personal connections and shared interests. The balance and dynamics between work and home expectations reflect their importance as these women must negotiate between their priorities to continue the upward trajectory toward the principalship. Who best to guide them, but their informal mentors.

Empowered by Informal Mentors

Leaning into their mentors, the four Latina leaders found what they needed to help them take that initial step towards administration, and then relied on them as they navigated their way through the principal pipeline. Through encouragement from their mentors, the Latinas experienced an awakening of who they are, finally recognizing their own potential, affirming their leadership abilities. A couple of them saw themselves in their mentors, but all of them trusted their advice, felt encouraged and had faith in what their mentors were saying and how

they were advocating on their behalf. The strength of their mentor relationship lied in their ability to trust and be vulnerable with each other.

One unexpected outcome was that these Latina administrators did not always seek out other Latinas as mentors. Two of the Latina administrators had mentors who were also Latinas, one had a White woman colleague as a mentor, and the other named a White male colleague as her mentor. The study showed that mentor relationships develop in various ways, at various times and can be fluid. The assumption is often that mentors come from a person's innermost circle, however, interactions with others who share similar professional endeavors can foster deeper connections, creating a supportive network, presenting itself as strong mentor relationship. Across all of the mentorships were mentors who believed in these Latinas, encouraged them became a lifeline for them, and helped them recognize their own potential which helped propel them forward.

While all the Latina leaders cited someone they regarded as a mentor, in this study the administrators also acknowledged that either their mothers, fathers or husbands provided support and were an additional source of guidance in their mentorships. As an assistant principal, Toni (Admin) recalls that she often called her dad when she was trying to discipline students in Spanish but needed to find the right words. He loved being what she called her "personal translator on speed dial (Toni, Admin)."

Through these relationships, mentors were able help the Latinas draw from their histories, their identities, and leverage their experiences to promote equity and social justice through their leadership roles, which is consistent with LatCrit Tenet 4, the centrality of experiential knowledge. The guidance and support provided to the administrators by their mentors plays a

pivotal role in empowering Latinas to take on challenges as they draw on their own lived experiences to offer insights and strategies rooted in shared experiences and understanding.

The Calling/La Vocación

As Latina leaders, identity and experiences significantly influence their leadership practices and programs (Crawford & Fuller, 2017). These leaders have found that embracing representation isn't merely about occupying a role; it's about answering a calling to advocate for change and take action as a way of addressing inequalities and promoting equitable opportunities.

Representation as an Asset in the Pursuit of Change

Representation is deeply intertwined with identity as it reflects the visibility of diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences. When individuals see themselves represented in various professional roles, it validates their identity and fosters a connection between them and those whom with they share ethnic congruency (Crawford & Fuller, 2017).

Mina (Admin) proudly leverages her identity and her shared experiences to help support parents and students that she interacted with daily. She was very intentional with building relationships with students and parents by using shared cultural values, language and experiences as bridges for connection. She shares the story about how her necklace of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* caught the attention of many students, especially first-generation immigration students and their parents and immediately tapped into their Catholic faith,

> So, I always wear my Virgencita [necklace], this is just my security, and the kids notice it right away. It's all Hispanic children, especially those who are first generation immigrants, they relate to it right away. They like seeing that. They'll come and tell me, look, here's mine. I just say, yeah, she protects us, La Virgencita protects us. (Mina, Admin)

This anecdote highlights the impact of representation, demonstrating how parents and students feel connected when they see symbols like the necklace of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* as they resonate with its significance.

The progress made to support Latino students and families reiterates the importance of continued efforts towards representation and change. Prioritizing the need for support for Latino students and parents is crucial. Hernández & Murakami (2016) emphasize the strong family and community values of Latina leaders and how these assets influence their interactions with parents and families.

Latina Leaders are Action-Oriented

In order to enact change, it is important for the Latina leaders to use a transdisciplinary perspective as a way to address inequitable systems, as advocated by LatCrit Tenet 5. By acknowledging the need to support marginalized students, these Latina administrators recognize the importance of being action oriented as a way of bringing about change. Their call to action can be seen in various ways. Among the participants, a high leverage action is their hiring practices and their intentionality when it comes to hiring staff, including teachers and administrators.

Ximena (Admin) sees the value in Latina women and the impact they have on education, going so far as to say they are essential to the future generation of educators. Her experiences leading a school during a global pandemic brought attention to the fact that education doesn't service all students and she attests that Latinas and women of color can bring the necessary change. Her focus is on the future and changing the narrative, not doing what has been done in the past, but rather adjusting the steps taken when moving forward. Hiring women of color is one practice that she implements as a way of making change,

> Absolutely, Latina women, I think, need to be at the forefront, and they need to have a space. Sometimes we're not outspoken, and I hate that about myself, but I've learned, if we can empower younger Latinas to do that, it's really important… I have intentionally hired Latina and African-American teachers and administrators…all of them have been women of color, either African-American or Latina. (Ximena, Admin)

While prioritizing the diversifying the pool of teachers to represent their communities of Latinas is important, for Toni (Admin), it is equally important to ensure diversity across staff members and encompass identities beyond the Latino community. Diversity and lived experiences are something that Toni (Admin) places a lot of emphasis on when thinking about who to hire,

> I like hiring people of color to get diversity into the school systems. I like having faculties with diversity. I think that's really important because you have a diverse student population, so you want to try to find as many teachers and adults that look like the kids you have. So, I always try to have, I always want to look for that (Toni, Admin).

These Latina administrators demonstrate their action-oriented approach through their hiring practices by actively seeking out teachers and administrators who are representative of their school community. They prioritize representation as a way of ensuring that their staff, including teachers and administrators, reflects the communities they serve. This upholds the idea that identities of school leaders, does, in fact, matter (Grissom & Keiser, 2011).

Pivotal Role of Advocacy in Latina Leadership

With their intentional decision-making practices, these strong Latinas recognize the pivotal role of advocacy and the impact it has on education. Ultimately, their advocacy initiatives aim at addressing systemic inequities and barriers, and amplifying marginalized voices as they work towards equity and social justice. They all acknowledge that their outlook is different as they navigate the challenges faced as administrators, yet continue to question and lead with

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resilience, empathy and a commitment to change. This aligns with Hernández et al., (2014), who maintain that leadership practices are influenced by cultural background, lived experiences and interactions at school, always adapting to the unique needs of their students.

For all of these Latina leaders, the responsibility is heavy, yet worth the *lucha* or struggle. Gabriela (Admin) learned to lean into her positionality as she leverages her identity and cultural experiences. She shared the importance of Latina leaders acknowledging their positionality, what they represent and being at peace with the responsibility that comes with it.

It is these personal experiences that have come up in culturally relevant conversations between Gabriela (Admin) and teachers, reminding teachers about her positionality. These *pláticas* or discussions also serve as a form of advocacy, revealing insight to systemic inequities that are found within educational systems.

> I use my own experiences…for me, being a Latina, a mom, a female, I was a former EL [English Learner] student and my teachers know I will defend them without even saying anything, just my mere presence. (Gabriela, Admin)

Gabriela (Admin) admits that it took her time to acknowledge her positionality and what she brings to the table as a Laina, but she is becoming more confident and learning to advocate with increasing intentionality and purpose.

Ximena (Admin) shares similar opinions regarding the importance of leveraging her identity and positionality in order to make an impact in education. However, in her trajectory, she did encounter times where she wishes she would have had other Latina administrators to lean on for advice and engage in difficult conversations around leading and the principalship. She continues to advocate for other Latina leaders.

> I think we need a space, a place. I think we need a place where we [Latina leaders] can have these kinds of conversations. I think maybe someplace where Latinas can go and find the support that we need… Or I wish someone would've

told me, you don't have to take that on, you need to demand the respect, you're taking on so much. (Ximena, Admin)

In pursuit of equity and social justice, advocacy can take on many forms. For Mina (Admin), promoting cultural awareness is something that she left behind as her legacy before she moved up to a district office position. As a principal she advocated for cultural awareness and began highlighting a different culture every month, through daily videos. This was Mina's (Admin) way of advocating for those whose voice needs to be heard and presence needed to be seen. She rolled it out gradually, taking on most of the work herself, with help from the assistant principal, without any expectations from teachers. It was met with enthusiasm and eventually the counselor and teachers started collaborating with this, improving the content. As a result, evidence of cultural responsiveness was seen through classrooms. Mina (Admin) is quite proud of this work and hopes that it continues for many years to come.

The stories shared by these Latina administrators showcase their dedication to taking action and advocating for social justice and how through their professional roles, they are fulfilling their calling or vocación as they work towards creating a more equitable society for marginalized students and their families.

Con tacones, Latina administrators in educational leadership roles are committed to standing tall and asserting their presence in spaces where they find themselves underrepresented. These women are breaking barriers, embodying identity, strength and empowerment. Wearing *tacones* requires physical strength and balance, while carrying resilience and determination in the face of any challenge thrown their way. Standing taller, *con sus tacones,* Latinas are making their presence visible, challenging gender norms and stereotypes, and asserting their place in leadership roles.

Leadership, advocacy and empowerment are all important components, and necessary for these Latina leaders to embrace in their journey towards social justice and equity. Along their pathways, these four administrators must break the mold, challenge norms and lead with what they know about their students and communities.

In summary, their proactive approach aligns with the theoretical framework and its principles outlined in Tenets 2 and 3 of LatCRT. As Latina administrators ascend through the leadership pipeline, their commitment to challenge the dominant ideology is reinforced and aligned with LatCrit Tenet 2. These women have demonstrated that despite the fact that there is a dearth of Latina administrators, they have preserved and found themselves in a space that isn't necessarily set up for women of color. Their emphasis on representation and being action-oriented drives them to keep persevering in pursuit of equity and social justice. In an effort to promote a social justice agenda, LatCRT tenet 3 emphasizes the importance of challenging inequitable systems and power structures as a way of eliminating racism and all forms of subordination while empowering historically subordinated groups (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

The path to becoming a school administrator is not easy, often far from straightforward. Latina leaders aiming to make a difference in the lives of students and communities, especially in regions like California with a high number of Latino/a students (California Department of Education, 2021), face many challenges and obstacles along their trajectory. Despite what they face along the way, they push through and when they find themselves in the role of school administrator, their presence and leadership serves as catalysts for change within their school communities. Findings from this qualitative study will inform school leaders about the importance of seeking out leadership opportunities for Latinas as it underscores the contributions and unique leadership styles that they bring to the role of school administrators.

This chapter describes an overview of the findings and a discussion of the personal narratives of four Latina administrators in an effort to understand their unique experiences, challenges, and perspectives. This chapter will begin with looking at the purpose of the study, and research questions, followed by a discussion of the results in the context of LatCRT and connecting them to the literature found in chapter two. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with areas for future research, implications for district leaders and implications for social justice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore and illuminate the personal and professional trajectories of Latina school administrators, bringing focus to the obstacles encountered as they navigated the principal pipeline. Listening to the narratives of four Latina administrators helped the researcher comprehend how their leadership paths shaped their practices. These rich stories offered a unique perspective on Latina administrators' experiences and encompassed the

racialized barriers and challenges they faced through the principal pipeline, while highlighting their upward trajectories into leadership roles.

Research Questions

The following proposed overarching research question guided the research:

1. How do personal identities and authentic stories shape the leadership of Latina school administrators?

There are sub-questions that stem from the main inquiry:

2. How do Latina administrators overcome the workforce/home related barriers during their ascension to the principalship?

3. How do mentor interactions impact the leadership trajectory of the Latina administrators?

The goal of the study is to amplify the voices of Latina administrators and how despite the complex pathways they navigated, they arrived at space where their leadership impacted students, staff, and families.

After interviewing four Latina administrators and their mentors, common themes emerged related to their experiences as educational leaders. The overarching themes included: *the discovery of self and strengths to overcome barriers, mentorships and supports, and the Calling or la Vocación.* The following section is organized according to the themes that emerged.

Summary of the Findings

Although the pathway to the principalship was different for all four Latina administrators, they ended up exactly where they needed to be- leading schools with high Latino/a populations. Listening to their narratives recapping their non-linear trajectories, it was evident they shared

commonalities which connected them as Latina principals. These themes all played a crucial role in their journeys of empowerment. This study reaffirms that their perspective and experiences of help schools understand and address the needs of the Latino population (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Ochoa, 2007). The similarities between the administrators in the study reaffirmed what prior research suggests, which is that Latina administrators leverage their identity, cultural wealth, and perspectives to shape their leadership approach (Horak & Valle, 2016; Martínez-Morse et al., 2015; Yosso, 2005).

Based on the stories shared by the administrators, these women drew strength from their identity, their *sí se puede* mindset and with support from their mentors were able to tackle barriers head-on. Given their lived experiences as first-gen Latinas, these leaders developed a critical race consciousness as part of their identity (Bordas, 2001; Rodela & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2020), and shared stories regarding injustices associated with the many "-isms" they encountered, yet they persevered.

Some of the challenges and stereotypical assumptions they faced involved the dichotomy between balancing the responsibilities of being a school principal and the household responsibilities. Inequities and injustices, experienced in forms of microaggressions and sexism has been commonly associated with Latina administrators (Martínez et al., 2020). However, having mentors and strong familial support systems enabled them to persist, resist, find strength and propel themselves forward as they all yearned to advocate and represent students that looked like them. Having those mentors and support systems significantly impact a leader's educational career (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Méndez-Morse, 2004).

Despite the struggles they encountered along their challenging trajectory, they viewed their journeys as a calling to enact change within inequitable systems, and address inequities in

pursuit of social justice. These systems include diversifying staff, increasing representation, and advocating for marginalized student populations whose voices often go unheard. This aligns with what research has found regarding other Latino/a administrators who use their personal experiences to guide their practices and focus on equity (Rodelo & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2020).

Personal Narratives Influence Leadership Practices

It was evident after listening to the personal stories shared by all Latina administrators that their leadership practices are influenced by their cultural experiences. Research from the Literature Review affirms this notion that leaders can draw upon their life experiences to shape their professional identities (Murakami et al., 2018). By harnessing their experiences, Latina leaders establish explicit connections to oppressive systems when enacting change and leading for equity (Rodelo & Rodríguez-Mojica, 2019). These experiences include discovering their strengths and confidence, despite initial feelings of internal questioning self-efficacy, and self-doubt, especially when faced with obstacles. Despite these challenges, finding strong supports, including mentors and family members, these educational leaders stay focused on their goals and found their way through the principal pipeline.

Discovery of Self and Strengths to Overcome Barriers

The pathway to the principalship was not easy, and for all of these first-generation administrators, questioning their abilities, their knowledge and self-doubt was prevalent all along the way. These Latinas did not set out to become principals, they did not see themselves in that role. Lack of representation of Latinas in leadership positions added to their lack of self-confidence. The literature reaffirms that males are seen more in the role of educational leaders (Spencer & Kochan, 2000). For one of the administrators, it took her eight years of applying to finally attain a principal job. In her case, she was faced with the decision of having to leave her

district if she wanted a principal job. An area where the literature falls short is in addressing specifically what Latinas had to sacrifice or negotiate to propel them into the position of principals. Some administrators had to move districts, start over, rebuild their reputations and relationship. The literature lacks sufficient examination of root causes for the difficulty the encounter attaining a principal role. Reflecting on the theoretical framework, one can wonder if the struggle is related to race, gender, stereotypes, racism or oppressive systems created to keep women of color away from leadership roles. According to Hernández and Murakami (2016), women of color, including Latina leaders, often face these biases throughout their careers.

Despite the complexities found within their pathway, these strong Latina leaders powered through and found their way to the principalship. Through their empowerment phase, these Latinas confronted the challenges they faced, they found a seat at the table and leveraged their identities and lived experiences to help them become the strong Latina leaders they are today. The lean into their cultural wealth when making decisions including their hiring practices, and their interactions with parents and students, thus making them a great fit for schools with high populations of Latinx students.

Mentorships and Support

Another theme captured in the narratives of these Latina leaders is the significant role mentors and support systems play in their lives as professional women. This comes as no surprise as it has been found that mentors and support systems significantly impact a leader's educational career (Méndez-Morse, 2004). These supports include role models, mentoring relationships, and providing insight and strategies to help them succeed (Espinoza, 2010).

The Latina leaders in the study all named a person whom they considered to be a mentor. Someone who encouraged them and believed in them, or someone they admired and tried to

emulate. All of the Latina principals attributed some part of their advancement to a mentor. In all four cases, they had mentors who provided opportunities for them to advance in the principal pipeline, steering them into the pathway, and intending to help them one day get to the principalship. Whether it was offering them positions ranging from teacher on special assignment, department leader, coordinator, or assistant principalships, their mentors had a hand in their administrative journeys. It took the push of their mentors to put them on the pathway. Without their mentors, who knows if they would have made their way to the principalship. Their mentors were the first to believe in them and see what they didn't see in themselves. This underlying message was woven throughout all narratives, the notion that someone believed in them and encouraged them to move into the principal trajectory. Their mentors empowered them and helped strengthen their skills and mindsets, something that most first-generation Latina leaders struggle to do on their own. Having positive role models, advocates and mentors is a significant for Latinas (Hurtado & Kamimura 2003; Méndez-Morse, 2004).

All four of the Latinas in this study had a mentor who was very influential in helping build that self-confidence, and gently nudged them to take that leap of faith and apply for principalships. In the cases of these four Latina administrators, it took a prompting incident or advice from their mentor or colleague to bolster their confidence and help propel them to move to the principalship role. It is related throughout this study and the research in the Literature Review recognizes the importance of mentors, listening to their experiences and using their insight to help them as administrators successfully navigate their principal pathways (Espinoza, 2010; Méndez-Morse, 2004; Pierce, 2020).

The Calling/La Vocación

Despite the barriers the four Latina principals encountered, they persevered with inspiration and supports from mentors, and ultimately found themselves empowered and in the space and positions they aspired to be in. Embracing their personal and professional experiences propelled them to take action on behalf of their Latinx students, whom they represent. As site principals, they all realized that representation is an asset that they have leveraged when making decisions regarding their schools. They have all prioritized intentional hiring practices in order to include representation amongst their staff, in order to ensure their students see themselves in the their teachers. This does not only apply to teachers, but also to other Latinas in leadership roles. Current literature suggests that when Latinas see themselves represented in leadership roles, they are more apt to follow in their footsteps and pursue administrative roles (Méndez-Morse, 2004; Pierce, 2020).

These Latina leaders shared stories of adding a social awareness to their school sites, whether it was a culturally responsive practice, such as honoring cultural diversity monthly, or having conversations regarding cultural awareness, they pursued equity and advocacy on behalf of their Latinx students. Although they continue to lead with intentionality, through the lens of Latina principals, the struggle or *lucha* continues. The needs of Latinx students remains at the forefront of their mission to promote equity and social justice.

Once the administrators reached the final phase, and their calling, they continued to leverage their backgrounds, their experiences and their identity to make decisions to enact change. They sought out other Latinas who could share their knowledge, insight and offer strategies to help them succeed, a common practice among Latina leaders (Espinoza, 2010).

Relationship to Theoretical Framework

The framework used in this study is Latina/o Critical Race Theory or LatCrit (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001), a branch of Critical Race Theory, and includes social constructs such as racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression present in the lives of Latinos/as. This study highlights how these constructs are pervasive within the struggles the Latina administrators face as they made their way through the principal pipeline. The five tenets of the LatCrit framework are: (1) the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination, (2) the challenge to dominant ideology (3) the commitment to social justice, (5) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (5) the transdisciplinary perspective (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004).

Tenet 1: The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with the other forms of subordination (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). The challenges Latinas faced as they made their way through the principal pipeline can be linked to not only the dynamics of class and race but also with intersecting systems of oppression such as gender and language. They all went through a discovery of self and leveraged what they learned about themselves to overcome barriers.

Tenet 2: The challenge to dominant ideology (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). The LatCrit framework questions the fairness of educational systems which posit the notion that there are equal opportunities for everyone based on merit. For some of these Latina administrators it was not easy to attain the principal role, which makes one wonder if principal opportunities are accessible to all, including women of color. Despite their experiences, they did not hold back, these Latinas kept charging through in pursuit of their Calling or *Vocación.* They

relied on their resiliency, their strength and their perseverance to get their seat at the administrator's table.

Tenet 3: The commitment to social justice (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). This tenet directly aligns with the goals of the Latina administrators, as they use their roles as principals to help eliminate forms of subordination based on race, gender, class and language. They see this as their Calling or *Vocación*, and a way to empower students of color and increase Latina representation in educational environments, including administrative roles.

Tenet 4: The centrality of experiential knowledge (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). This LatCrit tenet supports the notion that the personal experiences and knowledge of Latina administrators are valuable and seen as strengths. Through conversations with their mentors, the administrators began to see how their knowledge, their lived experiences and multifaceted identities empower them as educational leaders.

Tenet 5: The transdisciplinary perspective (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Villalpando, 2004). This tenet calls for an emphasis on historical background, current challenges and drawing from various subjects to better understand how their multiple layers of identity and experience influenced their trajectory to the principalship. Through this lens, Latinas understand their intersectionality and feel as if their experiences are validated, and it empowers them to pursue their Calling or *Vocación* as they enact change in their schools in their quest for change and equity.

Implications for Leadership in Education

This study showcased how Latina leaders navigate obstacles and barriers when they make their way towards the principalship. For these women, it was never their end goal, but with encouragement from a colleague or mentor, they began to believe in themselves and decided

they could become school principals. Once seated at that leadership position, they began to use their cultural knowledge to help inform their leadership practices. A key idea that surfaced from all interviews is the way they all were very intentional about their hiring practices. They all took great pride in hiring teachers of color so that their students could see themselves in their school leaders. Representation matters, and if schools that are comprised of high numbers of Latinx students are surrounded by teachers who look like them, the possibilities are endless. As we have seen from these four administrators, it starts at the top. When district leaders are hiring principals and teachers, careful consideration should be given to the demographics of the school. Does representation matter? Grissom and Kesier (2011) suggest that the identity of school leaders does matter. If it does, then mentoring Latina's through the principalship is of critical importance. Therefore, hiring administrators and teachers who reflect the student population is something to strongly consider.

Implications for Social Justice

In a field dominated by White women at the teacher level, and men at the administrative level in public schools (Spencer & Kochan, 2000), this could present itself as a barrier for Latinas aspiring to be principals. In states like California, where Latinx students make up 54% of the student population (California Department of Education, 2021) representation in educational systems should mirror the population. With teacher pools made up of few women of color, in California only 15% of public-school teachers are Latinas (Murakami et al., 2018), it is not a surprise that at the leadership level, Latinas are not well represented in principal roles. Hiring more women teachers of color is a step in the right direction. However, the next challenge lies in ensuring that Latina women are presented with equitable opportunities to advance towards leadership roles.

Based on the study, we can summarize that Latina women in administrative roles advocate for equity, fairness, and equal opportunities for all. Their unique perspective influences their leadership and their decision-making practices. In collaboration with their mentors, they learn from experiences and use their knowledge to become action oriented as they strive to fulfill their calling - championing for equity and social justice. Through their efforts they look for opportunities to give back to their communities.

Although these narratives and experiences were shared by Latina administrators, their stories are not unique to education, but rather resonate across various professional spaces and communities. The upward trajectory, and struggle is a story that professional women share, one in which women are often overlooked and left behind, especially women of color. Positive mentoring, guidance and an increase in visibility matters when rising through the leadership ranks. The takeaways from this study can be applied to other professional communities where leaders have the responsibility to influence and bring up other women, especially women of color, reflect on their hiring practices, and enact transformative change.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Limitations

Phenomenological research typically involves a small sample size, which may not be representative of the larger population (Creswell, 2017). Due to the small group size and the range of participants within one geographical region generalizability is a limitation as the findings may not be generalizable to other groups, locations, or contexts. Although every administrator named more than one mentor who influenced them along their trajectory, the researcher limited the number of interviews to one mentor per administrator. Another limitation was just focusing the study on the relationship between administrators and mentors, not considering student perceptions of Latina administrators or their impact on student performance.

Recommendations for Future Research

In California, where the number of Latino/a students has increased from 14.0 million in 2010 to15.8 million in 2021 (Krogstad, 2022), understanding the unique needs of these students is imperative. The limited research available suggests that Latina administrators can bring valuable insight, experiences and perspectives that can help understand and address the needs of this student population (Crawford & Fuller, 2017; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Monzo & Rueda, 2001; Ochoa, 2007). The study touched on how these leaders built connections with students and their parents and how it created a bond between home and school.

The stories of the four Latinas have given us a glimpse into their personal identities and how they use it to inform their leadership practices and approaches, which in turn impacts Latino/a students in a positive way. Woven throughout their narratives is the theme of overcoming barriers, including self-identity, and finding a mentor along the way to help guide

them through the principal pipeline. Their resiliency helped them become more empowered and stronger, making them ideal leaders to help Latino/a students succeed in school.

Though their pathways were all different, there were some commonalities that suggest these experiences are impactful on students. These Latina leaders leveraged their cultural wealth to build relationships with students and parents. Although not explored in this study, student achievement should be analyzed more critically in search of a direct correlation between academic success and Latina principals. Another qualitative study could be developed to focus on student perceptions of Latin administrators and impact on student achievement. Coupling this potential study with the findings from this study could offer valuable understanding to the extent of influence Latina administrators have on student academic achievement. This would have to be a longitudinal study in order to accurately monitor metrics during the tenure of the Latina principal in search of correlations or causation. During a time when student achievement is closely monitored, and school districts are in search of ways to increase student test scores, perhaps it is time to look outside the traditional solutions and consider the significance of representation in school leadership positions.

Along the same vein, it would be significant to research the impact Latina administrators have on parent engagement and the communities they serve. A broader demographic of participants may also give more insight about the perception parents and the community has towards the Latina administrators.

While the narratives from the Latinas were authentic, conducting a second follow-up interview during this study could have offered clarity to topics or questions that could have been brought up through conversations with other participants.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the limited research specifically related to Latina administrators. With the current educational emphasis on academic achievement and increasing test scores, school districts with diverse populations are seeking out ways to design their educational practices to help support and meet student needs. The identities of these students matter, and those who share similar identities already have a toolbox ready to use as they understand the cultural nuances that impact their students. The Latina leaders in this study, despite facing obstacles, were supported by mentors who helped them ascend to the principalship where they advocated for equity and change. For these Latina administrators their journeys were long and challenged by barriers, but through mentorships and determination they did not let the barriers be the end of their journeys but the start of something new – a calling to do more, as Alvaro Vieira Pinto's (1960) quote reminds us that,

> Limit situations are not "the impassable boundaries where possibilities end, but the real boundaries where all possibilities begin." They are not "the frontier which separates being from nothingness, but the frontier which separates being from being more." (Pinto, 1960)

The trajectory of these Latinas presented them with challenges, tested their abilities and beliefs in themselves, and others, and pushed them to their limits. These moments of adversity led them to profound personal change. In the end, they found their Calling, *encontraron su Vocación.*

Recruitment Email (Administrators)

Dear Potential Participant (NAME)

My name is Ana Arias, and I am a graduate student in the Joint Doctoral Program (JDP) in Educational Leadership with UC San Diego and Cal State University San Marcos. At this point in the doctoral program, I have defended my dissertation proposal and am ready for the next phase. I am reaching out for your assistance with my study on Latina school administrators.

My research aims to comprehend the journey of Latina administrators through the principal pipeline and their related experiences. Specifically, the overarching research question for this study: *What are the personal, authentic stories of Latina school administrators?* My goal is to learn about the experiences of Latina administrators and how it is evidenced in their leadership practices and approach.

To participate in the study, individuals who meet the following criteria would need to complete an interview either face-to-face or via Zoom, with the possibility of an additional follow-up:

1. California public school female principals or assistant principals who have served as administrators for a minimum of two years
2. Female administrators who identify as Latina
3. Individuals not known by the researcher

Your participation in the study will include:

- Completing an anonymous demographic background survey
- 45-60-minute individual interview

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout this process, responses are confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the publication of my dissertation study. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and eliminate any comments or references you feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations. You can withdraw at any time from the study.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you and hope that you will choose to participate in the study. I hope to begin interviews for the study by June 2023. If you are interested in participating, please email Ana Arias at: arias02@csusm.edu

With gratitude,

Ana Arias

Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership

UC San Diego and CSU San Marcos

(760) 521.7043

Informed Consent Form

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Latina Administrator Informed Consent

Invitation to Participate

Ana Arias, under the supervision of Dr. Ana Hernández, Professor of Multilingual and Multicultural Education, California State University San Marcos, is conducting a study to explore Latina school administrators. As an individual who is currently a principal or assistant principal, your permission is requested to participate in this study.

The study has three goals:
1. To focus on the personal, authentic stories of Latina school administrators.
2. To learn about the experiences of Latina administrators in their roles as educational leaders.
3. To learn how their cultural background is evidenced in their leadership approach and practices.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following:

- You will be completing a brief survey that asks your demographic information and background information as you made your way to your administrative role. Questionnaires will be emailed and can be filled out at your convenience.
- You will participate in an in-person or video conference interview (45-60 minutes) which will be audio recorded and transcribed. This will be related to your experiences as a Latina school administrator and how they've influenced your leadership practices. Information collected from this study will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used during the course of the study to protect the integrity and anonymity of the participants. All electronic files created from the data collection process will be stored on the researcher's laptop computer that is password protected with an additional layer of encryption/double authentication.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include: 1) feeling anxiety, stress or discomfort answering questions about your experiences as a site

administrator; 2) time spent on completing surveys and interview may divert from site duties or personal time; and 3) potential breach of confidentiality. Final dissertation available upon request.

SAFEGUARDS

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

1. Anxiety - The researcher will make every effort to ensure that the stress level is minimized by giving the administrator the option of not answering a question or having the option of discontinuing at any time. Participants may withdraw from study at any time. To minimize risks all data collected will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used.

2. Time - The researcher will make arrangements with participants during the workday, after work hours or on weekends to avoid missing valuable work time or personal space.

3. Confidentiality - Your identity will remain anonymous, and any identifying elements of your responses will be changed to ensure confidentiality during any reporting of the study findings. All data (audio recordings, transcriptions, data analysis) will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer with double authentication. Any documents gathered will be securely stored in the researcher's home. Audio files will be transcribed immediately upon completing the interviews. Pseudonyms will replace identifying information.

Benefits

The benefits of the study to you include your personal reflection on your experiences as a Latina educational leader. Your participation in this research study will provide a great contribution to the field, in advancing a deeper understanding of Latina principals and assistant principals.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You will be asked to notify the researcher if you decide you no longer wish to continue in the study.

Incentive

You will receive a $15 Amazon gift card as payment for taking part in this study as a way of showing appreciation for your time.

Questions

If you have questions about the study, please call me at 760.521.7043 or e-mail me at arias02@csusm.edu or Dr. Ana Hernández, Committee Chair at ahernand@csusm.edu or (760) 750-8507. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the study.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.
☐ I agree to have my interview audio taped and recorded.

_____ _____

Participant's Name Date

_____ _____

Participant's Signature

_____

Researcher's Signature
Ana Arias
Doctoral Student/Researcher

Background Survey Questions

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Background Survey Questions

1. Please complete the following statements by selecting the appropriate range.

	0-1 years	2-3 years	4-5 years	6-7 years	8-9 years	10 or more
How many years have you been an administrator?	○	○	○	○	○	○
How many years did you serve as a classroom teacher before accepted an administrative position?	○	○	○	○	○	○
How many years did you serve as an Assistant Principal before you became a Principal?	○	○	○	○	○	○
Once you began to seek administrative positions, how long did it take you to acquire your first administrative position?	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. Are you able to speak, read or write any languages other than English. Please specify below:

	Please select all that apply
Speak	○
Read	○
Write	○

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Semi-structured Interview Questions with Latina Principals/Assistant Principals

1   Tell me about your general background, personal and educational.

2   Prior to becoming a site administrator, what were your previous professional roles in education?

3   Tell me about your journey through the principal pipeline.

4   Can you describe your leadership style, and if it is influenced by your identity as a Latina school administrator?

5   Are there traits you inherited from your family that you feel have contributed to your administrative approach?

6   How do you work with teachers, staff, students, and parents to create a shared vision for your school's future, and ensure that everyone is working towards common goals? Where would one see evidence of this?

7   Please share your experiences as a Latina administrator.

   a.   What are your strengths? How do your strengths enhance your role as an administrator? In what ways have they impacted the learning of culturally diverse students?

b. What types of support have you received throughout your journey? What examples can you provide to supports received prior to becoming a school administrator and during your tenure? Were there other supports you sought that were not available to you?

c. What types of barriers have you encountered throughout your journey? What examples can you provide to types of barriers prior to becoming a school administrator and during your tenure?

d. If you encountered barriers, how did you overcome them? Is there a specific or compelling example you can recount?

8 Do you currently have mentors that you lean on professionally or personally? If so, have they been the same mentors or different? Explain your relationships.

9 Can you discuss the role of mentorship in your own career path, and if it has influenced your approach to leadership and administration?

10 Do you see yourself as a mentor? Who do you mentor professionally or personally? Could you provide 1-2 examples of how you mentor individuals?

11 Does your personal identity, including your culture and language, influence your leadership approach, practices, or decision-making process? If so, how?

12 Can you share a specific example of a time when your identity as a Latina intersected with your role as a school administrator, and explain how you navigated that situation?

13 Can you describe how being a Latina school administrator impacts your personal life and household dynamics? What are ways you balance or mitigate roles between home, work, and other responsibilities?

14 What advice do you have for others who are aspiring Latina school administrators?

15 Are there ways your website reflects your identity as a Latina school administrator? Can you provide 1-2 examples?

16 Is there any other information you would like to add that I may have missed in my questions?

Interview Questions to School Administrators about the Website

1. Do you set up and manage your school website?

   a. If not, do you provide feedback or input regarding what is on your school website?

2. How is your mission or vision statement messaged to the community on your website?

3. Who is the target audience for your website? Do the languages and images represent the community and diversity of families?

4. How is information accessible to parents who speak a language other than English?

5. How do you communicate with parents who do not have access to technology?

Appendix F

Recruitment Email (Mentors)

Dear Potential Participant (NAME)

My name is Ana Arias, and I am a graduate student in the Joint Doctoral Program (JDP) in Educational Leadership with UC San Diego and Cal State San Marcos. At this point in the doctoral program, I have defended my dissertation proposal and am ready for the next phase. I am reaching out for your assistance with my study on Latina school administrators.

My research aims to comprehend the journey of Latina administrators through the principal pipeline and their related experiences. One of the administrators who has agreed to be interviewed as a participant in my research study has named you as their mentor. Once the initial interviews with Latina administrators are conducted, I will interview the mentors named by the administrators. Through interviews, I will gather data on your experiences as a mentor who guides Latina educational leaders. The data collected from these mentor interviews will provide valuable insights into the potential leadership characteristics that seemed to be influenced by their identification as Latinas.

To participate in the study, individuals who meet the following criteria would need to complete an interview either face to face or via Zoom:

1. Mentor who has supported the Latina administrator in her administrative career.
2. Individuals not known by the researcher.

Your participation in the study will include:

- 60–90-minute individual interview

Your confidentiality will be respected throughout this process, responses are confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the publication of my dissertation study. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and eliminate any comments or references you feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations. You can withdraw at any time from the study.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you and hope that you will choose to participate in the study. I hope to begin interviews for the study by September 2023. If you are interested in participating, please email Ana Arias at: arias02@csusm.edu.

With gratitude,

Ana Arias

Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership

UC San Diego and CSU San Marcos

(760) 521.7043

Mentor Consent Form

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Mentor Informed Consent

Invitation to Participate

Ana Arias, under the supervision of Dr. Ana Hernández, Professor of Multilingual and Multicultural Education, California State University San Marcos, is conducting a study to explore Latina school administrators. One of the participants in the study has named you as her mentor, and for purposes of this study, the researcher would like to request an interview. Before moving forward, your permission is requested to participate in this study.

The study has three goals:
1. To focus on the personal, authentic stories of Latina school administrators.
2. To learn about the experiences of Latina administrators in their roles as educational leaders.
3. To learn how their cultural background is evidenced in their leadership approaches and practices.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY

If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following:

- You will participate in an in-person or video conference interview (60-90 minutes) which will be audio recorded and transcribed. This will be related to your experiences mentoring Latina educational leaders. Information collected from this study will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used during the course of the study to protect the integrity and anonymity of the participants. All electronic files created from the data collection process will be stored on the researcher's laptop computer that is password protected with an additional layer of double authentication.
- Maintain anonymity and confidentiality of the interview process regarding your Latina administrator mentee.

RISKS AND INCONVENIENCES

There are minimal risks and inconveniences to participating in this study. These include: 1)

feeling anxiety, stress or discomfort answering questions about your experiences as a mentor; 2) time spent on completing the interview may divert from site duties or personal time; and 3) potential breach of confidentiality.

SAFEGUARDS

To minimize these risks and inconveniences, the following measures will be taken:

1. Anxiety - The researcher will make every effort to ensure that the stress level is minimized by giving the administrator the option of not answering a question or having the option of discontinuing at any time. Participants may withdraw from study at any time. In addition, the participants will receive the interview protocol in advance to become familiar with questions prior to the interview. To minimize risks all data collected will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used.

2. Time - The researcher will make arrangements with participants based on their summer availability.
3. Confidentiality - Your identity will remain anonymous - with double authentication. Audio files will be transcribed immediately upon completing the interviews. Pseudonyms will replace identifying information.

Benefits

The benefits of the study to you include your personal reflection on your experiences working with a Latina educational leader. Your participation in this research study will provide a great contribution to the field, in advancing a deeper understanding of Latina principals and assistant principals.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You will be asked to notify the researcher if you decide you no longer wish to continue in the study.

Incentive

You will receive a $15 Amazon gift card as payment for taking part in this study as a way of showing appreciation for your time.

Questions

If you have questions about the study, please call me at (760) 521-7043 or e-mail me at arias02@csusm.edu or Dr. Ana Hernández, Committee Chair at ahernand@csusm.edu or (760) 750-8507. Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT:

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the study.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.
☐ I agree to have my interview audio taped and recorded.

_____   _____
Participant's Name   Date

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____
Researcher's Signature
Ana Arias
Doctoral Student/Researcher

Mentor Interview Questions

California State University
SAN MARCOS

Semi-structured Interview Questions with Mentors

1   Tell me about your personal identity and how it has impacted your professional background.

2   Tell me your experiences in mentoring Latina educational leaders who have become administrators.

3   What is the strength of your mentorship and relationship? Provide one or two examples.

4   In my interviews with the administrators, they identified barriers they encountered along their trajectory in becoming a school administrator. In your role as a mentor, have you addressed barriers and, if so, what advice did you give?

5   What recommendations do you have for other mentors who are mentoring Latina administrators?

6   What are the resources you use to help in the mentoring process and professional growth? Are there guiding principles, frameworks, conferences, favorite articles/podcasts that you rely on in reference to your mentee? Tell me about some of these resources.

7   In mentoring Latina educational leaders, did you find unique leadership characteristics that seemed to be influenced by their identification as Latinas?

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